

PP Praying For Protection: *Becoming a People of Prayer-Part 13*

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Illus Every year, the Parachutist, the official publication of the US Parachute

Association, has published an article called their 'fatality summary'. In the article a writer analyzes the factors contributing to parachuting deaths the previous year. Parachutists are classified first as students, then after 20 jumps they get their A license. After 50 jumps, their B, after 100 jumps their C and after 200 jumps their D license. In 1993, an alarming statistic was noted. 59 % of all parachuting deaths were suffered by elite jumpers who possessed a D license. The graph showed a dramatic spike upward for fatalities among those with 200 to 1,000 jumps.

Just because a person is mature doesn't mean he or she is invulnerable

Could that be true among mature Christians?

Do we have the tendency to become overconfident and vulnerable to our enemy?

Temptation comes in all shapes and sizes

And a major part of prayer is asking our heavenly Father for help to resist temptation

For protection from our enemy who roars like a lion, seeking to devour us

And that captures the heart of this final petition we have before us

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

Matthew 6:13

PP 1-We are asking that God would not let us fall into sin

Let me ask you: *Does God lead His children into temptation?*

PP The answer from Scripture seems to be no: ***"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."***

James 1:13

The counter argument is, as we will see more fully in a moment, that the word

'temptation' can mean testing

So in this view, what we are encouraged to pray is 'God, don't lead us into *testing*'

PP But how can that be when the Scriptures tell us to ***"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness."*** **James 1:2-3**

Jesus would not tell us to pray against the very process of our maturity?

As you can see, this is a difficult petition to understand, so we need to look a little deeper

And we must understand it, if we are to pray for spiritual protection as we ought!!

The Greek word for ***'temptation'*** is basically a neutral word with no connotation for good or evil, positive or negative

That comes as a surprise for us because in our language, temptation is always bad

The root meaning of this word has to do with ***proving***

In its positive meaning, Scripture translates this word with *trial* or *testing*

In its negative meaning, it is translated *temptation*, which is a solicitation toward evil

PP This one Greek word can have two meanings, *a difficult trial, or a solicitation to do evil*

So which meaning is in the mind of Jesus: ***"And lead us not into temptation?"***

To resolve this, we need to understand one more thing about this word

God will never, and can never solicit us to do evil, holiness won't allow it
There is no part of God which wants to see people sin, sin is vile to Him
However, He will test us in order to prove our faith genuine, in order to help us grow in
our perseverance, which will cause us to mature
On the other hand, Satan will, and always will want to see us fall
Satan never tempts us in order to help us succeed
So when he brings temptation, his only goal is that disprove our faith, to cause us to quit
trusting God, and to weaken our us
God sends tests to prove our faith genuine, Satan seduces us to evil to prove our faith
weak and false

PP Job shows us God's purposes for testings: "***He [God] knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come out as gold.***" Job 23:10

What God gives to us, or allows for us as a trial or test is almost always used by Satan as
a temptation

We see this with God's own Son, Jesus Christ

PP "***Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.***" **Matthew 4:1**

Who did the leading? *The Holy Spirit*

Who did the tempting? *The devil*

Did God know what was going to happen? *Yes He did*

Was God seducing His own Son to do evil? *No, He can't and wouldn't*

Was God putting His Son in a place where he could be tempted by the devil? *The answer has to be yes*

From God's point of view, it was a test

From Satan's, it was a temptation

PP But the trial and temptation profited Christ, Who "***Although He was a Son, he learned obedience through what He suffered.***" **Hebrews 5:8**

PP "***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.***" **Heb. 4:15**

PP C.S. Lewis commented on Christ and temptation in his book Mere Christianity:

"Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is... You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives in to temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later... and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man Who knows to the full what temptation means."

Just as a person will not grow stronger without painful exercise, we cannot grow stronger
without trials and enduring temptations

Suppose a child of God contracts a deadly disease

God will use that sickness as a trial to purify motives, so that person looks away from the
things of earth to the things of heaven

In that same sickness, Satan will work to tempt him to despair, to bitterness and to turn
away from the Lord

What God intended for his good, Satan will try and use to pull him down

The same is true when we get a promotion with a nice raise in salary and authority
How about that businessman on the seventh and last day of a long trip who checks into
that hotel

He is tired, has worked hard, and feels he deserves to get what he wants
And that remote is sitting on top of the television and adult entertainment is a button push
away

*That man has as much sat down to the desk, picked up his number two pencil and started
taking an exam*

From God's perspective, he is being put to the test, and will his faith endure?

From Satan's, he is being seduced so that his faith will fail

God provides the daily bread, all that he needs to pass the test and bring glory to the
name of God

But Satan whispers that he deserves it, nobody will know, he'll get what he wants

He blinds you to the misery you are going to feel afterward and fixes your eyes on the
pleasure of the moment

Genuine faith looks at the same situation and sees an opportunity to trust in God, pass the
test and glorify His name

God intends trials to build us up, Satan makes them temptations to tear us down

To pray '**Lead us not into temptation**' is to request that God will not let Satan seduce us
to the point where we fall, but that we will walk in His strength through the trial

God, keep us from falling to the devil's temptations and instead to build our faith

We cling to the truth that God never brings us into a situation with the intention that we
should fail, but that our enemy always wants us to morally fail, so we need the

Lord's leading, guidance and protection

The Jews understood this well for they formed an ancient evening prayer that went like
this:

*"Lead me not into the power of transgression, And bring me not into the power of
sin, And not into the power of iniquity, And not into the power of temptation, And not into the power of
anything shameful."*

Lord, we pray, spare us from those temptations that You know we cannot withstand, and
let us emerge from your trials having proven our faith genuine

PP 2-We are asking that God would rescue us from the devil

"but deliver us from evil."

Friends, apart from the grace of God enabling us to walk through trials, we would surely
fail

None of us is above falling into massive sin and walking away from God

Spurgeon told of two men who were condemned to die under Queen Mary. One boasted
loudly to his companions that he would be a man at the stake because he was so grounded in the gospel
that he would never deny Christ. He longed for his martyrdom as a bride for her wedding. But
his fellow prisoner was a poor trembling soul, who though he didn't want to deny His Lord, was
terrified of the fire. He spent his days asking for prayer and weeping over his weakness and
crying to God for strength. When they both came to the stake, the strong boastful man saw the

firing torches and recanted of his faith in Christ, while the trembling man stood firm as a rock, praising God as he died in the flames.

Our enemy is a crafty, powerful being who seeks to destroy us
Some of our Bible translations have *'evil'* and some have *'evil one'*
The grammatical construction of this verse almost always refers to a specific person rather than an abstract idea

PP Peter writes ***"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*** (5:8)

This is a request for God to rescue us from Satan and his forces
But there's more and it is a beautifully intimate picture of our heavenly Father
The word *'deliver'* means more than just rescue or save someone from a danger

PP *It has more the meaning of drawing to oneself*

God delivers us, saves us, not just to bring us away from the danger, but to Himself
Pretend you pull up to a home to visit a friend, and outside sits a very large, snarling, growling dog

Two things might happen

Your friend hollers out the window and tells the dog to stop barking and not to eat the guest

Or your friend comes out, heels the dog, and then walks with you into the home

This is the picture of what God does for His children as He *'delivers'* them from danger

The Bible calls the evil one *'Satan'*, or *'devil'*

PP The two titles each have the same basic sense of *one who separates*

Temptation is meant by Satan to draw us away from each other and God, where he can easily defeat us

But here we are asking God to draw us away from Satan, and bring us to His side

In other words, asking God to deliver us from the evil one is to ask him to rescue us by bringing us to Him in a closer, more trusting relationship

In our own strength, we will lose to Satan's temptations, we are too weak and our flesh is too strong

But God works in us to strengthen us to emerge ultimately victorious, passing the test, when we come to Him in daily prayer for deliverance

Do you remember those haunting words that Christ spoke to Peter?

PP ***"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."*** **Luke 22:31-32**

'Peter, my Father is letting a trial come to you. Satan is going to toss you in a whirlwind, and tempt you severely, separating you from faithfulness. But I have prayed that your faith will endure and not fail, I want you to succeed and pass the test. And you will, and when you do, strengthen the faith of your brothers.'

Did Peter fail? Initially yes, succumbing to temptation, denying Christ three times

He wanted to quit ministry in hopelessness

But Christ restored him, so completely that he would one day write with full experience

PP of conviction: “[We] who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Peter 1:5-7

Lord, we are weak, rescue us from Satan and bring us closer to You
Let me briefly share one more point from this verse

PP 3-We are asking that God would protect other Christians

We have been seeing all through this prayer that it is a family prayer
There is no I, me or my in this prayer
But there is our, we and us

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Christ could have taught the disciples to pray this prayer and learn the principles found in it for *themselves*

It could have gone, *“My Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give me this day my daily bread, and forgive me my debts, as I also have forgiven my debtors. And lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.”*

But He didn’t, instead He used the language of community

There is a principle here that lies below the surface that teaches us to care for each other
I participate in keeping you from falling to temptation, and you participate in keeping me from falling to temptation

A pastor that served on my ordination council, an intelligent, learned man, has just been asked to leave his church because it was discovered that he was having an affair with 5 different women
You might think that his church during this time was floundering and limping along
It was growing, they were planting other churches, things looked great

Let’s get beyond the superficial with each other and admit, we sin, and we sin badly
We are tempted some days to the point where the battle consumes every bit of us
And when we fall to temptation, we tend to carry the burden of shame alone, hating ourselves for what we did, growing more hopeless that we will ever be victorious
Knowing this, we must begin battling for each other against our enemy from our knees
Praying fervently for one another’s protection

Let me close with this account from Scripture about our Heavenly Father Who delivers His children from enemies

King Jehoshaphat was in trouble

The Ammonites and Moabites were moving a vast army toward Jerusalem

The men of Israel would not be able to withstand this well-armed army

The King called for a nationwide fast and families from every town and village gathered

in Jerusalem to seek the Lord
Jehoshaphat stood before them and offered one of the greatest prayers in the Bible
He began by declaring God's greatness, then he reminded God of the promises He made
to protect His people
Then he told God, 'We're in big trouble now!', admitting their powerlessness to face this
Army
So God sends a prophet who told the people to 'stand still and see the salvation of the
Lord'
So Jehoshaphat put the male singers who praise the Lord in their uniforms at the head of
the army and sent them out
And when they began to sing and praise the Lord, the invading army turned against one
another to their utter destruction
The battle was won by the Lord, with not a single arrow of Israel fired
Is it any wonder then why the Lord's prayer ends with ***"For Yours is the kingdom and
the power and the glory, forever. Amen."***
A note of praise!

When you are facing bitter temptation, begin to praise the Lord and be delivered