

**"Do Not Lead Us into Temptation But Deliver Us from Evil" - (Matthew 6:13)**

Zac Poonen:

In Matthew 6:13, Jesus taught us to pray: "Do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil". True holiness is the result of a battle. It doesn't come to the armchair Christian who wants to sit back and 'be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease.' It is only as we fight the battle against our lusts and against Satan that we become holy. We may then ask the question, "If the devil is such a hindrance to our holiness, why doesn't God destroy him?" The answer to that is that the devil is, in a sense, necessary for our spiritual growth just as a furnace is necessary to purify gold. It's only when our muscles are subjected to resistance, that they become strong. Otherwise, we would remain fat and flabby. It's exactly the same in the spiritual realm. We need resistance if we are to be strong spiritually. And this is why God permits Satan to tempt us.

Adam was innocent - but innocence is not holiness. Adam would have remained innocent all his life and never become holy if he had not been tested. Innocence is a state of neutrality, and from that state of neutrality to become positively holy, Adam had to exercise a choice. He had to say 'No' to temptation and 'Yes' to God. Only then would he become holy. And so he had to be tempted. Unfortunately, he said 'No' to God and therefore became a sinner.

Jesus too was tempted in all things as we are (Heb. 4:15). But the difference between Him and Adam was that He always said 'Yes' to God. In order to be a perfect man, the type of man that God wanted all men to be like, Jesus had to learn obedience from the things which He suffered. He faced temptation and overcame, and thereby, was "made perfect" (Heb. 5:8,9). That was why Jesus prayed for His disciples saying, "Father, I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from evil" (John. 17:15). Jesus knew that His disciples could never become holy if they were taken away from the pressures and trials and temptations that they would face in this world. We need to distinguish between temptation and sin. If we are suddenly tempted by something that we see accidentally, that's not sin. But if we continue to look at what tempts us, or to think about it, then we sin. We can't avoid being tempted. But we can certainly choose to turn our eyes and our mind away from what tempts us. It's the way we exercise our will that determines whether we are holy or sinful.

God doesn't hold us guilty for being tempted. But He certainly wants us to resist temptation. As someone has said, "I can't prevent the birds from flying over my head, but I can prevent them from making a nest in my hair." You can't prevent temptation from coming to you but you can prevent it from settling down in your mind! God's Word does not teach that we should face as many temptations as possible in order to show how strong we are. No. We are to run away from temptation. Paul tells Timothy to flee from the things that tempt him (2 Timothy 2:22). We must run away from the love of money, from flirtatious women and from anything that will lead us away from God.

Our attitude to temptation should be, "Let me keep myself as far away from it as possible". We are not to be like little children who try to find out how near the edge of a cliff they can go without falling down, or how close to the edge of the railway platform they can stand without the train knocking them over. That's not the advice any sensible parent will give his child. We tell our children to keep far away from such dangers. That's what God tells us too.

This petition really means, "Father, don't allow me to face temptation that is too strong for me." It is the cry of one who knows that his flesh is weak, and who realises that he can easily fall.

Leading on from this prayer, "Do not lead us into temptation (which is too strong for us)" is the petition, "Deliver us from evil." The word 'deliver' could be paraphrased as, "Draw us to Thyself." So the prayer is "Draw us to Thyself from evil." God and evil are pulling in two different directions. And we are saying, "Father, I feel this pull towards evil in my flesh. But don't let me go that way. I don't want to yield to it. Please pull me over Your way." This longing and hungering to be drawn towards God is an essential requirement for a life of victory over sin.

One reason why the promise in Romans 6:14 - "Sin shall not be master over you," is not fulfilled in the lives of many Christians is because deep down in their hearts there is not enough of a hunger for freedom from sin. They don't cry out, "Oh God, deliver me from sin at any cost." They are not thirsting for it. They would have cried out if they were seriously sick. But they don't feel that sinning is as bad as being sick! No wonder they remain defeated. It says in Exodus 2:23-25, "The sons of Israel sighed because of their bondage, and they cried out; and their cry for help rose up to God. So God heard their groaning...and God took notice of them." That's when God will begin to take notice of us too - when we begin to cry out in desperation for deliverance. God says, "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:13).

**It is a principle in Scripture that for anything precious that we are to receive from God, we must hunger and thirst for it first. Only then do we learn to appreciate it sufficiently. And so God waits until we hunger and thirst; and then God gives us what we really long for.**

**The Christian life is a battle against Satan. And in this battle, Satan has one of his agents right inside us - our flesh. Since our flesh is on the enemy's side, it will do everything possible to prevent us from being effective in fighting Satan. Never forget that. That's why we need to long for total deliverance from the flesh, if we are to overcome Satan.**

**There are many believers who pray, "Oh God, protect me from all the evil that the devil and other people are trying to do to me." But all the while they keep feeding their flesh (the enemy's agent) by giving it everything it wants. Then God cannot deliver them from all evil. Let us long for deliverance from our fleshly lusts first. Then it will be an easy matter for us to overcome Satan. Then we will find that no evil from men or demons can touch us.**