



Text: Matthew 6:13; James 1:2-17<sup>1</sup>  
Series: Talking With Our Father  
Title: Part 6 -- Talking With Our Father about Our Trials  
Date: April 5, 2009  
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

A minister parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a meter. So he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: "I have circled the block ten times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. `Forgive us our trespasses.'

When he returned, he found a parking ticket from a police officer along with this note: "I've circled this block for ten years. If I don't give you a ticket, I'll lose my job. `Lead us not into temptation.'"

In our series on *Talking with Our Father* we've looked at:

**Adoration** – "Hallowed be your name"

**Mission** – "Your kingdom come"

**Submission** – "Your will be done"

**Petition** – "Give us today our daily bread"

**Confession** – "Forgive us our debts..."

Today we come to the last of the themes included in Jesus' model prayer – the theme of...

### **Protection**

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

**OR**

**"...from the evil one." Matthew 6:13**

We've said this prayer so many times that perhaps we haven't been struck by what a strange prayer this seems to be.

Would God actually lead someone into temptation? Anyone who truly loves God doesn't want to be tempted. We don't want to fail him. Who wants to be dragged into evil? We don't want to do wrong, do we? Surely God knows this. Why then would he lead anyone into temptation?

This prayer raises **three questions** that demand answers:

**First** of all,

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**Does God ever place people in situations where they can be or will be tempted?**

Let me refocus the question: **Would God ever lead one of his dearly loved children into temptation?**

Let me focus the question even more closely: **Would God ever lead His dearly beloved Son into temptation?**

The startling answer is: **Yes.**

You see, Jesus, God's beloved Son, is instructing his followers out of his own, personal experience. This is not an abstract, hypothetical kind of prayer that Jesus instructs his followers to pray. Just two chapters back in Matthew's Gospel, at the beginning of chapter four, we read these words:

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

For forty days and nights Jesus fasted in the desert, preparing for the test that was coming.

I want you to notice two things in Matthew's statement.

**First** of all, Jesus was "led by the Spirit" into the place of temptation. It didn't come randomly in his life. God had planned and purposed this situation. Although the devil did the tempting, God had arranged the confrontation to serve His purposes for His Son. The Devil was being used by God as an instrument to accomplish His plan.

This should reassure us. Whenever a situation arises where we sense that we're under a temptation, we can be sure that God has everything under control and that He has led us "by the Spirit" into this situation.

In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we read these reassuring words...

**"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." 1 Corinthians 10:13**

God will not let the Enemy crush you – he will not allow it! He will never allow you to encounter a temptation that you cannot handle – but that doesn't mean it's going to be easy! God's promise is both a challenge and a comfort. Nothing that happens to us is outside of the Father's control. That is comforting to know. But



it's a challenge us to realize that we can never claim that a temptation we've encountered was too strong for us to bear.

The **second** thing we need to notice in this statement concerns who does the tempting. Notice carefully what it says: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

The Word of God is clear – James puts it this way in the passage we read earlier...

**"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**

God leads us into situations where we are tempted but He does not tempt us. The agent of temptation is always the devil – but the devil acts within the limits set for him by the Father. Just as we read it in the story of Job in the Old Testament, God sets limits on Satan's ability to tempt and try and harm.

The Word of God is always careful to preserve God's holiness by never ascribing temptation to him – why should He bother when Satan is so willing to do it for him! You see, even when Satan thinks he still has some freedom to do his own will, God is still in control.

Does God lead us into situations of temptation? Yes.

But this fact screams a **second** question:

### **Why does God lead us into temptation?**

It's important at this point to understand that the word translated "temptation" can also be translated, "testing." You see...

**The Father's purpose in our "temptation" is our "testing" – the devil's purpose in our "testing" is our "temptation."**

God's purpose in testing is to build us and strengthen us. The devil's purpose is to tear us down and destroy us. The crucial distinction is found in our response to a given trial situation. James tells us that enduring God's testing brings blessing but yielding to Satan's temptation is spiritually destructive. James wrote...

**"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. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” James 1:12-14**

The words “trial,” “test,” “tempted,” and “tempts” are translations of exactly the same Greek word. What leads us to see the same situation as either a “trial” or a “temptation”? It’s our response. What we make of those challenge situations determines whether God is glorified in our testing or Satan is exalted in our temptation. If we allow our sin nature to take hold and lead us, it becomes a temptation. If we use God-given means to say no to our flesh and its desires and to say yes to God, it becomes a test.

Let me illustrate. When GM or Ford builds a car they run tests on it to bring out its strengths and identify its weaknesses so that they can remedy the problems. They have a constructive purpose. But when Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate, tests a car, he’s looking for it’s weakness to highlight them. He doesn’t intend to fix them; he wants to point them out. Now with apologies to Mr. Nader, God’s use of the devil in temptation is like GM or Ford giving their cars to Ralph Nader, telling him to test them out, and then using Nader’s results to make the car better.

There are **three significant reasons why God leads us into temptation and testing.**

**First, God uses temptation & testing to show us what is really in our hearts.**

In Deuteronomy 8:2 God reminds his people, Israel, of all the difficulties they encountered during their forty year journey in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. Moses challenged Israel to...

**“remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.” Deuteronomy 8:2**

The hunger, the thirst, the battles, the plagues, the fatigue, the wandering, etc. — all these difficulties had been designed to test the resolve of the people to follow their God, come what may!

Jesus used this technique when he put Judas in charge of the disciple’s cash-box. Knowing the greed that was in his heart, Jesus “led him into temptation” by giving him the purse, with the hope that exposing this sin would lead Judas to repentance.

Because God uses testing and temptation to reveal what is really in our hearts, Richard Foster has paraphrased this prayer to read: “Lord, may there be nothing in me that will force you to put me to the test in order to reveal what is in my



heart.” Today’s English Version of the Bible translates this prayer, “Do not bring us to hard testing, but keep us safe from the evil one.” The New Revised Standard Version translates it: “And do not bring us to the time of trial....”

Jesus knew the very real pain that such testing can bring. That is why he instructed his disciples to pray that they be spared its agony. But all too often, we leave God with little choice but to use this painful method to bring sin in our lives to light.

When God exposes something unholy in our lives through the use of temptation and testing, what do we do with it? We are faced with a simple choice: confess and repent of it, or cling to it.

Judas chose to cling to his sin – what will we do?

The **second** use God makes of temptation is **to strengthen and build our faith.**

I love J.B. Phillips’ translation of James 1:2-4. Listen to this beautiful explanation of the purpose of testing:

**“When all kinds of trials and temptations crowd into your lives, my brothers, don’t resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends! Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence.” James 1:2-4 (Phillip’s Translation)**

The story is told of a young man who decided to grow peaches. He went all out, investing everything he had to develop the orchard. But disaster struck one spring when a heavy frost wiped out most of the peach blossoms. When Sunday came he wasn’t in church. The next week he was absent again. And the same thing followed true the following Sunday.

His pastor became concerned and went to visit him. The young man declared: “I’m not going to church anymore! Do you think I can worship a God who cares so little for me that He will let a frost kill all my peaches?”

The minister replied, “God loves you better than He does your peaches. He knows that while peaches do better without frosts, it is impossible to grow the best men without frosts. God’s objective is to grow men – not peaches.”

The **third** use God makes of temptation is **to magnify Himself in our weakness.**

When we realize how weak we are in the face of the devil’s power of temptation, we are forced to call upon our only source of hope.



In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul put it this way when he was faced by “a messenger of Satan” that tormented him:

**“Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:8-10**

The apostle John said, “Greater is he that is in you [that is, God the Holy Spirit] than he that is in the world [that is, the devil]” (1 John 4:4) When we turn to God for strength to deal with the “messenger of Satan” that torments us, we are declaring to the visible, material world and the invisible, spiritual world that God is greater than the tempter of our souls!

Yes, God does lead us into temptation on occasions to expose the true intent of our hearts, to build our faith and character and to give us an opportunity to display His great power to strengthen us.

And when God does choose to allow a time of temptation in our lives, the second half of this prayer becomes deeply relevant – **“but deliver us from evil.”** This appeal raises the **third** question...

### **How does God “deliver us” from temptation?**

There is an important spiritual principle underlying this question...

**God never asks us to do or endure something that he doesn’t enable us to accomplish by His strength.**

God is never irresponsible – when he brings us to a test, he always provides what is needed to pass it. Earlier we read Paul’s testimony that God would never allow us to be tempted beyond what we could bear. Paul goes on in that affirmation of God’s care for us to declare that God always, **“with the temptation ...will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13b)**

Jesus knew that we would need help in the time of temptation. After his victorious confrontation with the devil in Matthew 4 we read this brief, poignant conclusion to his encounter:

**“Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.” Matthew 4:11**



Jesus found his confrontation with the devil exhausting – and so will we!

Although in the middle of temptation it might seem that there is no help that can reach us, I want to outline **four means of deliverance** that are always available to us, regardless how difficult our situation might seem. Each one of them is constantly and immediately available to us, but we must grab hold of them and make use of them when temptation strikes.

### **We are delivered when we...**

#### **Acknowledge God's Presence**

**First**, if we want deliverance from “the evil one” or from the power of “evil” we need to acknowledge God's presence. God has promised...

**“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5)**

Although it might seem that God has left us, God is faithful to his promises and we can be confident that he is with us even in the time of our darkest temptation and hardest testing.

Not only has he promised to be with us, but Jesus declares himself to be our deliverer. **Jesus' name means “The Lord will save.”** His whole mission in life and death was to bring salvation and deliverance for his people. Paul testifies to Christ's deliverance in his own experience when he was led into temptation before his accusers and judges.

**“But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me ... So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.” 2 Timothy 4:17**

Jesus, our Deliverer, is with us and, as the old hymn said,

**“He is able to deliver thee, he is able to deliver thee;  
Tho' by sin oppressed, go to him for rest;  
Our God is able to deliver thee.”**

#### **Apply God's Instruction**

**Second**, if we want deliverance we need to apply God's instruction. God has given us the benefit of his wisdom in the Word of God. We need to use Scripture-shaped wisdom to deliver ourselves from situations that will bring us into temptation.

A simple word that God has given us to cope with temptation is the word, **“flee.”** In **1 Tim. 6:11**, Paul instructs Timothy to “flee” from the **temptations of wealth and greed**. In **1 Cor. 6:18** Paul counsels believers to “flee” from **sexual**



**temptation.** In **1 Cor. 10:14** he tells us to “flee” from **false religion**. If we can identify situations that tempt us, it is foolish for us to repeatedly place ourselves in them. Flee, get out, go away, take off!

If we have a problem with materialism, then hanging around shopping malls with our VISA cards in our pockets is not wise!

If we have a problem with staying faithful to Christ, then spending time away from regular worship is not wise!

If we have a problem with sexual temptation, then hanging around video stores or spending too much time on the internet without accountability is not wise!

If we have a problem with drugs or alcohol, then spending time in places where these are readily available is not wise!

Portia Nelson has written about the need to take responsibility to act in wisdom for our own deliverance in her “Autobiography in Five Short Chapters.”

#### Chapter One

I walk down the street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I fall in. I am lost ... I am helpless. It isn't my fault. It takes forever to find my way out.

#### Chapter Two

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I pretend I don't see it. I fall in again. I can't believe I am in the same place, but it isn't my fault. It still takes a long time to get out.

#### Chapter Three

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I see it is there. I still fall in...it's a habit. My eyes are open. I know where I am. It is my fault. I get out immediately.

#### Chapter Four

I walk down the same street. There is a deep hole in the sidewalk. I walk around it.

#### Chapter Five

I walk down another street.

We need to “wise up” and make use of the deliverance advice God has already provided.

### **Access God's Power**

**Thirdly**, if we want deliverance we need to access to God's power.

In James 4:7 we are told...



**“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” James 4:7**

Why is that? Is it because we’re powerful and mighty? Certainly not! The devil could crush us or delude us without hardly breaking a sweat!

No, the reason he runs is simply because we are children of God and God has given all of his children the promise of His protection and the power to resist the devil’s attacks. All we need to do is to make use of His promise and power.

Paul told Timothy...

**“God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”  
2 Timothy 1:7**

We have been given the power of God to stand firm against the devil and all his schemes to break us down. When we take hold of our birth-right as children of God and let Satan know that we are aware of our position and power in Christ, he understands, even more than we do, that he has met his match because...

**“he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” 1 John 4:4**

The Denver Post carried the story of a sheep-rancher who had a serious coyote-problem. She had tried everything to stop the coyotes – sprays, electric fences, even sleeping with the sheep at night. Then she discovered the llama. According to this rancher: “When llamas see something, they put their heads up and walk straight toward it. That is aggressive behaviour as far as coyotes are concerned and they won’t have anything to do with that ... Coyotes are opportunists, and llamas take the opportunity away.”

When we sense the devil is trying to take advantage of us, we should face him down the way the llama does and according to the Word of God, “he will flee from you.”

**Answer with God’s Word**

**Finally**, if we want deliverance we need to answer with God’s Word.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil, he didn’t resort to big philosophical arguments. He didn’t threaten the devil with hell-fire, brimstone and eternal destruction. To every enticement of Satan, Jesus simply responded, **“It is written... It is written.... It is written....” (Matthew 4:4,7,10)**

Three times Satan tempted and three times Jesus responded with a truth from God’s holy, inspired and authoritative Word. The Word of God is described as being “sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb 4:12) and when we’re in close-



quarters fighting with the enemy of our souls there is no better weapon to drive him back than the very words of God himself.

When Billy Graham stands to preach the Gospel and urge people to receive Christ as Saviour and Lord, he is battling for the hearts and minds of men, women and children. His enemy is not human ignorance but the deceiver of our souls who wants us to remain in spiritual darkness and never come to the light of Christ. What argument does Billy Graham make? Simply this, "The Bible says..." Over and over again he repeats that simple argument, "the Bible says...the Bible says...the Bible says." "It is written ... it is written."

A little girl once said in response to a question about how to deal with temptation: "When Satan comes knocking at the door of my heart, I send Jesus to answer the door. When Satan sees Jesus, he says, 'Oops, I'm sorry. I must have the wrong house.'"

Simple, but true! When we send the very words of God to the door of our heart and our mind, Satan realizes that he is powerless and as Martin Luther wrote in his hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," "one little word shall fell him."

If we want deliverance from the evil one:

- We need to acknowledge God's presence. Jesus is "the Deliverer" and he fights for us! Satan has already been defeated by him.
- We need to apply God's instructions. Be wise and flee. Use your own Scripture-shaped wisdom to avoid compromising situations.
- We need to access God's power. Resist the devil and he will flee! When he comes at us, stand firm in the power of God.
- We need to answer with God's word. It's sharper than any sword; more powerful than dynamite; more deadly to evil than any radiation.

**Jack Hayford** has written a beautiful expression of what our Deliverer can do for us. As I read these words, I invite you to sit back, rest in God's presence, and receive the grace you need for deliverance in your time of temptation.

**"Once in all hist'ry, O great the myst'ry  
God came to earth veiled in flesh so man could see.  
In Christ the Saviour, God showed His favour –  
He to redeem us ascended Calvary.  
Dark was the hour, hell-born the power  
Which tore the flesh of the Lamb spent on the Tree.  
Death now partaking – Hell's power breaking –  
Hear "It is finished!" The Lamb cries, "Victory!"**

**Come to the Mountain – bathe in the Fountain,**



**Wash in the blood Jesus shed upon that Cross.  
Call Jesus' name now – come make your claim now,  
He'll break your bondage; redeem your every loss.**

**Great deliverance, mighty redemption  
That can reach the lost like me,  
Cleanse from guilt and set me free.  
So I'll shout, "Hallelujah!"  
And, "Praise God – Jehovah!"  
For the great deliverance and victory."**

- **The Lord's Table**
- **Songs of Communion:**
  - There Is a Redeemer (#308)
  - There Is a Fountain (#336)
- **Benediction**