

## **Robert Vannoy, The Lord's Prayer, Message #5**

“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”

I would like to resume the series I began several years ago. The last message in that series was in February of last year, which was on the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. I've been considering the 6<sup>th</sup> petition of the Lord's prayer beginning several years back some of you have not heard the earlier messages but you'll just have to join in with our considerations this morning on the 6<sup>th</sup> petition. I might just mention a few words by way of introduction; we read in Mathew 6 verse 9, the Lord's words, “after this manner therefore, pray ye.” And the Lord taught this prayer, to his disciples he says “pray after this manner” he gave the prayer as the pattern as instruction in how to pray. You find that this prayer is carefully structured. There's the preface then there are 3 petitions that concern themselves with God: his name, his kingdom, and his will. Then there are three petitions that concern themselves with our needs. Our needs for daily sustenance, our need for forgiveness from sins and then finally in the 6<sup>th</sup> petition the matter of deliverance from temptation and evil.

We read in verse 13 of Mathew chapter 6, “and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” In the 5<sup>th</sup> petition sin is viewed as a debt that must be forgiven and we spoke in the last message in this series of the infinite disvalue of sin that required the death of Christ. The giving of God's own son, to provide for forgiveness and to make atonement possible. But sin is not only a debt that must be eradicated it is also a power against which we must fight and contend. So the 6<sup>th</sup> petition compliments the 5<sup>th</sup> petition. We first ask for the removal of guilt; the eradication of death. But then we ask for deliverance from the power of sin.

When sin is forgiven, that is not all that we need. Because there is danger. Danger which we must face everyday, every hour, every minute of our lives. David said in one of his psalms “happy is the man whose sin is forgiven whose iniquity is covered” and that's certainly a testimony that we can all share in. It's very true. But that's not the end of the matter because sin is a power that we must reckon with every day and every hour. We can easily forget this. Yet we are instructed here by the Lord to pray that we, “be not led

into temptation but be delivered from evil.”

I doubt that any of us and rebuked Satan as we are that told like Martin Luther did, as he sat in his study. Perhaps we may sort of ascribe that to a kind of medieval, superstition that simply questions Martin Luther’s acts. But I think we should be more conscious than most of us are, on a day-to-day basis on the presence of Satan and demonic forces in the world around us, the enormous power of sin which threatens us at all times, as we live our lives before the Lord. When we pray the 6<sup>th</sup> petition, I think we’re doing two things: first, we acknowledge the danger of being defeated by the power of the evil one. We do that in the words, “and lead us not into temptation” acknowledging the danger of being defeated and certainly we request God’s grace to deliver us from the power of the evil one, see in the last phrase, “but deliver us from evil.” So first of all we acknowledge the danger of defeat by the power of the evil one and because we acknowledge that fact we pray “lead us not into temptation.”

I think it’s interesting that while Jesus teaches us to pray with these words “lead us not into temptation” James, the brother of Jesus, said in James 1:2 “my brother count it all joy when ye fall into many temptations.” The NIV has changed that translation from the King James translation to “when you fall into trials of many kinds.” The Greek word is the same “temptation.” “Lead us not into temptation.” “Count it all joy when you fall into many temptations.” Jesus says pray that you will be kept from temptation. James says be thankful when you have temptation. How do we reconcile these statements? Are they conflicting? I think it’s resolved in the double meaning and the usage of the word “temptation.” You find it in the original and you find it reflected in certain translations. Temptation is sometimes used in the sense of to test or to try in order to show genuineness. At other times, the word “temptation” is used in the sense of enticement to evil. In the sense of seduction to evil to do that which is wrong.

We find in several places in the King James translation that God tempts his children. For example, in Genesis 22:1 we are familiar with that verse, we read “and it came to pass after these things that God tempted Abraham.” This was the narrative with respect to Abraham offering up Isaac his only son, his son of promise as a sacrifice to

God at the command of God. But that chapter's introduced with the words "God did tempt Abraham." Yet in James 1 verse 13 and following, we read "let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God' for God cannot be tempted with evil neither tempts he any man, but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. When lust has conceived it brings forth sin and sin when it has finished brings forth death." Now how do you put those two together? Genesis 22:1 "God did tempt Abraham" James, "God tempts no man, but each man is led astray by his own lust when enticed."

Well, certainly there's a different sense in meaning. It's the same word but it's used in a different sense as far as meaning. There's no contradiction but there's two different uses of the word "temptation." I believe that we can say that God tests his people to strengthen their faith he never entices them to evil. Of course, I think that's the reason why in our translation we now use two different words to avoid any confusion. God tests his people to strengthen their faith to test their faith to grow them closer to himself. Satan tempts a person by enticement to evil. God does not do that. When God tests a person he does it to measure or strengthen their faith. Later in Genesis 22 we find that God says to Abraham after he has been obedient all the way to the point of slaying his son before the angel spoke and prevented him, God said, "Now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son from me." Abraham was strengthened through that experience in his faith and what the Lord provided was a sacrifice in place of his son. When Satan tempts a person, he does it to lead a person into sin and turn them away from God.

Now having said that, how does that relate to our own situation. I don't think we've solved all the difficulties even when we make that distinction because the question that arises is: how can we discern which one it is ourselves in our own experiences? What experiences that come into our lives are testing's from God and what experiences are enticements to sin or temptations from the devil? How can you know the difference? Or can our experiences contain both those elements at once? For example, some tragic experience enters our life: serious illness of a loved one; serious financial reverses or

some sort of a crisis. Your living in a place like Afghanistan today or Iran, you're in a situation where war is involved. Many Christian people have been in circumstances of war. Perhaps you're in Italy or Greece today, where there have been earthquakes, family homes taken and lots of disasters. We can see lots of illustrations of that sort of thing. But suppose that kind of a crisis experience comes into your life. How do you understand what is happening to you? Is the experience to be understood as a test from God with a positive design, the positive intent to strengthen your faith, draw you closer to the Lord, or is this experience an attempt by Satan to produce negative results in your life to turn you against the Lord to cause you to fall and stumble, to cause you to doubt your faith? I think the answer to that question is, we really can't know. We aren't given the kind of revelation that some of the people in the Bible are given with respect to that issue.

The Bible makes it clear that our life experiences maybe initiated by Satan. Take the illustration of Job where Satan comes before God and says let me do this to this man Job. Those experiences, you might say, were initiated by Satan as an attempt to turn Job against God. Job withstood the test. Or they may be initiated by God like the example of Abraham we have just spoken of where God tested Abraham. God put that experience in Abraham's life in order to strengthen and test his faith. Some have the attitude that God tests differently then Satan tempts in the sense that God brings light and reverses disasters into our lives in order to bring us to closer dependence on himself, in order to destroy the idea of self-sufficiency which is something that grows prominent in our life when things are fine. The Lord can bring reversals in order to show us our dependency on himself. Where as Satan brings us prosperity and success and riches to lead us away from God that may often be the case but certainly not always. Job was tempted by Satan with disaster and David was tested by God with prosperity. Testing by God is not only with reverses it can also come by prosperity. Temptation by Satan is not only by prosperity, it can come by reversals and great difficulty. God tests in both ways, Satan tempts in both ways.

I think it's interesting in Proverbs that Augur in Proverbs 30 verses 7-9 says, "two things I have required of thee. Deny them not to me before I die. Remove far from me

vanity and lies. Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be fool and deny thee [self-sufficient] and say ‘who is the Lord’ or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain.” “Give me neither poverty nor riches” Riches are a danger, poverty is also a danger, both can easily come to us as temptations from Satan or testing’s from God.

Now that means that in our own life experiences, both God and Satan are active and we need to be aware of that. They’re both at work. They don’t work together, they don’t work in harmony. They are waging a battle for our allegiance and that battle extends to how we respond to every experience brought into our lives. Do we respond in a way that honors God and strengthens our faith, strengthens our testimony before others, or do we respond in a way that denies our faith and dishonors God and destroys our testimony before other people. In all of this, there’s a blessing that should not be missed.

We can always know when temptation comes that God is active and not Satan alone. God always sets the limits for Satan’s activity. We go back to that passage in Job that gives us so much insight into Satan and his activity and of God’s relationship to that. We find in verse 12 in Job 1, God says, “All that he hath is in thy power. Only upon himself put not forth thy hand.” God sets the limits, Satan can tempt but God sets the limits so we can always know that when Satan is active at the same time God is active. That’s a great blessing. On other hand, when testing comes from God we can be sure that Satan will attempt to thwart the positive responses that God desires from us. We must remember that Satan will be active in those situations where God is testing us.

Now to get back to the 6<sup>th</sup> petition. In the 6<sup>th</sup> petition, the first part of it, when we pray “lead us not into temptation” we pray that we be not led into temptation, why? Because if we are aware of the enormous danger that is involved in temptation, God has the power to do that or not to do. It’s very striking that in Mathew chapter 4 verse 1 in the passage of the temptation of Christ, that we read that, “Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Reflect on that. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. God controls all things including the temptations that he permits Satan to confront us with. He permitted Satan to tempt Job.

Jesus himself was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted. When we realize our own weakness and when we are aware of the power of Satan, we will pray to be spared from temptation, “Lead us not into temptation” why? Because Satan has designed temptations to lead us away from God and he is powerful. But if temptations come and they do come and they will come, we pray then to be delivered from the power of the evil one which is the second part of the petition of the Lord’s Prayer. We pray that we may be spared, first of all, because of the danger: “Lead us not into temptation.”

But when temptations come we can rejoice because there is grace and benefit for our spiritual growth as in the power of Christ we overcome that. “Deliver us from the evil one.” 1 Corinthians 10:13 is probably the classic verse in all of Scripture with respect to temptation: “there is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that you may be able to bare it.” First of all, we acknowledge the danger of defeat by the power of the evil one, “Lead us not into temptation.” Secondly, we request God’s grace to deliver us from the power of the evil one—“but deliver us from evil.” God has given us that promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 “he will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able but will provide a way of escape.” That is, the second part of the 6<sup>th</sup> petition is really a claiming of that promise—“deliver us from the evil.”

Now what is the evil? I think the Westminster Larger Catechism rightly defines the evil as “consisting in Satan, the world, and our own flesh” I might mention that the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms have questions that go through the Lord’s prayer, petition by petition, and deal with what is taught in each one of these petitions. I feel that if you study that you’ll find it very enriching and beneficial.

A knowledge of the enemy is important if he is to be defeated. We must realize then that first of all our enemy is Satan. Behind all-evil is Satan. A personal being constantly active against God and his children. He goes about seeking who he might devour. He knows our weak points. We have to be aware of his activity for we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, spiritual forces in high places. We need that armor to defeat him.

Secondly, the world is our enemy. Not the world in the sense of the cosmos, God's creation which he loves, but the world in the sense of the evil system which is all about it. The world over which Satan is the ruler. Paul says "be not conformed to this world"--that evil system that is offered in the world all around us. One of the great temptations of our time is word "conformity." Romans 12:2, "be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Now, we don't have time to discuss this morning what being conformed to the world involves in any kind of detail. What is worldliness in that sense? It is often identified with certain externals, that people have labeled worldliness. Attendance at theaters or dances, playing of cards or wearing lipstick or growing a beard, whatever. Certainly I think we have to be careful not indiscriminately to copy the standards with respect to style, customs, activities and amusements of the world. But worldliness goes way beyond those things. When Paul says, "be not conformed to this world" how do we think? What are our attitudes? What are our values with respect to all of life? In the areas of music, art, politics, law and history and anything we can become involved in, we need to think in a Christian way with Christian values and not let the standards of the world be those that are decisive with respect to our own life style and our own values. "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Let your thoughts be renewed with respect to all you do and all that you are by the word of God and by his Spirit as he structures your thoughts and ideas in all these areas.

Thirdly, we should remember that our enemy is our own self. Satan, the world and our own self. Here is perhaps the most dangerous because the enemy is inside. James 1:13 says, "we're enticed to evil by the desire by our own evil hearts." We are fallen creatures, we have that bent towards evil and wickedness within us. Now perhaps you feel, "I don't fall into temptation very often I stay away from places and sources of temptation I know how to control that sort of thing." Certainly it is a good thing to stay away from places and sources of temptation but if you feel the temptation as something that's not very relevant to you its not a vital question because you've learned how to handle it, I've think you've missed something very important.

Because of what we are, because of our evil nature, everything we meet, every event that involves us, every talent we possess, every desire of inclination, every experience can become a temptation by the work of Satan in our fallen nature. The very fabric of our everyday experience is made up of countless temptations and testing. It is going on all the time, they confront us in everything we do. You can't escape them. How do you respond to the problems and tensions and frustrations of everyday life? Maybe in the budget, caring for your children, or doing your assignments. Doing the mundane things like washing the dishes or cleaning your room, putting up with the frustrating things that we all encounter in life, Paul says "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing. In everything gives thanks for this is the will of God concerning you." He also says "I have leaned in whatever state I am to be content." Are we content? "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." We need to remember we are weak, Satan is strong and it is only by God's grace that our lives can show the fruits of the spirit instead of the works of the flesh. But God is with us. "He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able but will provide that way of escape." We are told that he that is within us is greater than he that is within the world. My grace is sufficient; my strength is made perfect in weakness. Prayer is not our only weapon with respect to fighting temptation but it is an indispensable weapon.

If you read the chapter about the armor in Ephesians, Pray always, we need the helmet of salvation, the sword of the spirit, we need all the elements of armor that we can get but praying always with all prayer is indispensable. Let us therefore beware the power of the evil and ask for God's grace to deliver us from this power. "For thine is the kingdom and the glory forever. Amen."

Let us pray. We thank you again our Father this morning that you are with us and that even when temptation comes we can call upon your strength and your grace to deliver us. We would pray this morning, as you have instructed us to do, that we not be led into temptation but that we be delivered from evil. And we ask it in Jesus name, Amen.



Transcribed by Dominique Gobeil  
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