

## The Lord's Prayer Part 8 And Lead Us Not Into Temptation

In the Book of Isaiah, chapter 55, the Lord tells us that there will be times that we will read some of His truths within these scriptures and we'll observe events that take place and we will simply not be able to comprehend His Will and His ways. His ways are sometimes too high and lofty, and our minds are too small to fathom the mysteries of His hidden wisdom. And so, for some of those things, we'll simply have to accept the words He says, and the things He does, and live with them. Listen to that truth given to us in Isaiah chapter 55,

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts,  
Neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the Lord.  
<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are my ways higher than your ways,  
And my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Though this be true, and though God's ways be so very mysterious, it still seems that He would have us, you and me, to be as thoroughly diligent as we can be and to go as far as we can go in our efforts to "know Him" as best we can.

Why are we considering these thoughts today? It's because here in this portion of the Lord's Prayer that we will consider today, there is a very mysterious request that the Lord Jesus instructs us to make to God the Father. That request, in verse 4 is,

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. (Luke 11:4)

May we pause and again read these familiar words that we've been reading each week, words given in Luke chapter 11.

<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

<sup>2</sup> And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. <sup>3</sup> Give us day by day our daily bread. <sup>4</sup> And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. (Luke 11:1-4)

Today, as we focus our attention on these few words of verse 4, for me, and for many other students of God's word throughout the years since Jesus first spoke

them, the extent of our understanding of these words has been perplexing, requiring us to be very careful as we study them.

Because these words truly are peculiar. They seem to suggest that God might “lead us into temptation”, and that seems contrary to all that we know and hope about God. Those words again . . .

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. (Luke 11:4)

At first consideration, these words remind me of some of the other peculiar words spoken by the Lord Jesus, words that He called “Hard Sayings”. “Hard sayings” like those that He once said to His disciples about them having to “eat His flesh and drink His blood”. When Jesus said those words, many of His disciples were so confused that they turned away from Him, leaving only the twelve to follow Him. And even the faithful twelve could not comprehend His words, but they stayed with Him anyway saying, “Lord, who else are we to turn to, only You have the words of life”.

And folks, that answer that the twelve disciples gave is often the one that we will have to give. When we can't quite comprehend the depth of the wisdom and the character of God, we will sometimes have to just continue to obediently follow Him, trusting that at some point, he will begin to give us understanding.

And I think that that might especially be so with these words that we are studying here today in verse 4.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. (Luke 11:4)

On the surface, these words seem so contrary to what we want to believe about God. We want to think that He would never lead us into a circumstance where we would be tempted. And our minds immediately go to scripture texts such as those given in James chapter 1 where we're told,

<sup>13</sup>Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (James 1:13)

Some bible teachers have gone so far as to say that these words in James chapter 1 might contradict these words in the Lord's Prayer.

But folks, there is never a “contradiction” within God's word! These two, the words of the Lord's Prayer and these words here in the Book of James still remain

as truth and they both stand on their own. So then, what are we to do with these truths?

For myself, and I believe for each of us, many of the mysteries of God are just that. They are mysteries. And mysteries will not always remain as mysteries. The answers to many of the mysteries of God will be revealed to us over time as we very diligently draw closer to Him in our faith and in our trust. It's then that His Holy Spirit will begin to open the eyes of our heart to some of His most hidden of secret wisdom.

God tells us about that in those familiar words given in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, where we are told,

<sup>6</sup> . . . we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, <sup>8</sup> which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

<sup>9</sup> But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,  
Nor have entered into the heart of man,  
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

<sup>10</sup> But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

This is the simple truth about all that we will ever hope to learn and to know about God. Our part is to diligently study these scriptures. And as we do, His Holy Spirit will then minister to our spirit revealing to us the deep and hidden secret things given within His words.

And it's then that we will mysteriously begin to see things, and hear things, and understand things that we never knew before. And that is so with special truth we are considering here today.

Folks, throughout these scriptures, God carefully reveals to us that all of the things in existence are at His beckon call and use, to serve the purposes of His righteousness, whether those things be good or they be evil. And it does not make God evil to use some, or all of those things for His purposes.

What an amazing God we have! He is not hindered nor bound as we are by limitations. All things, all creatures and all people are His instruments. And while

at times, His actions might seem strange to us, even painful, Psalm 119, verse 68, assures us that there is one truth that always stands firm, and that truth is that "God is good and He does good". And that makes Him worthy of our complete trust.

And may I say again, God is able to use all things, whether they be good or evil to serve the purposes of His righteousness. And that has been so even from the very first moments of human life.

You will recall that in the Book of Genesis chapter 2 we suddenly discovered in the Garden of Eden that along with the very good and righteous "Tree of life", the potentially evil "Tree of knowledge of good and evil" also stood right with it, openly and fully accessible, in the very center of the Garden.

That dangerous, sin-bearing tree was not guardedly hidden away in the back of the Garden so that Adam and Eve would not accidentally stumble over it, but was right in the center of the Garden where they would pass by it every day.

It is as we begin to realize subtle truths such as these that we begin to better understand the very special character of God, His will and His plan.

God is a God of "choices". And He has created man in His image, with the same ability to choose.

While all of the rest of God's creation is limited, we, mankind is filled with both the ability and the continual compulsion to choose.

I confess to you that I have prayed often that that were not so, and that God would take away my own ability to make choices, because, too often, I make very poor ones.

Why then, with our having such potential to err in our choices, does God give us that ability? Why is the making of choices so important to God?

While I would like to say that I know the exact answer to that mystery, I confess that I don't. But I do know that it has first to do with His "Holiness". God is "Holy"! And His Holiness demands that every soul be given an ability to choose, to have the choice of choosing Him and His ways, or rejecting Him and His ways.

In Deuteronomy chapter 30, the Lord tells us,

<sup>19</sup> I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you, life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life.  
(Deuteronomy 30:19)

And no, I don't know how God differentiates between His choosing of us and our choosing of Him, but He does. And at the heart of the choices being made, is His perfect holiness.

And because we, mankind, are created in His same image, His "Holiness" requires that He give us the freedom to make the choices that we make. And we must make them!

And also, within the choices that we are required to make is His "First and greatest commandment", the commandment for us to "love" Him. To go beyond our self, even deny our self, and love Him. And elemental to the nature of "love" is the need for intentional choices to be made by us.

Let me say that again. Choices are a basic, elemental part of "love". And love is "who God is". Love is His very essence and at the heart of all that He does. And having been made in His image and for His purposes, love must also be our guiding influence and necessity.

And yes, granted, there are forms of love that can exist outside of choice, but not the kind of love that God desires of you and me. "Choice" is a specific act of a person's "will". And as we are told in these scriptures, and especially in John 14:21, it is God's desire that you and I make an intentional choice to love Him and to obey Him. Listen to those words given in John 14:21.

<sup>21</sup> "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." (John 14:21)

Again, it is God's desire that you and I make an intentional choice to love Him and to obey Him. And then also to choose to love others and to show forth fruits and do acts of love that prove out our love.

So, beginning there in the Garden of Eden, all mankind, you and me were faced with choices. There in the Garden was the first of many, many times that

truths such as these given here in the Lord's Prayer would begin to influence men's lives.

Adam and Eve were the first. In the peace and serenity that they enjoyed there in the Garden, they were probably not aware for the first long while that they even had an ability to choose. They had no real need of choice.

But once satan, the evil one, the deceiver, the tempter was allowed to gain access to them, he cleverly pointed out that although they had been told not to eat of that special "tree of knowledge of good and evil", they did, in fact, have a choice. And if they did make that choice, then they themselves could become just "like God".

In their ignorance, they probably never stopped to realize that their choice to eat of that tree was actually a personal rejection of God Himself and a personal rejection of His love for them. And neither did they probably understand that their choice was also a personal rejection of their own love back to God, the love that they were supposed to keep pure and unsullied.

Looking back at the terrible results of the choices they made that day, we want to cry out to God, "Why, why do you allow us the opportunity to be tempted to make such awful choices, choices that almost always seem to turn out wrong. Why Lord?"

Again, the answer is, "As dangerous and as eternally consequential as it is, the ability to make choices is absolutely essential to the expression of real love and obedience. And the best way that we can truly show love and obedience to God and love towards other people is through the choices we make.

One might argue, and somewhat rightly so, that "choice" in the hands of ignorant, unknowing, even innocent people is as dangerous as placing a loaded gun next to a small child. And it often is!

With Adam and Eve, that first simple choice served to remove all traces of pure "love" from their souls and to instead substitute in its place "selfish gain". And that is what we see so often within our own souls today, the desire for selfish gain. And what a tragedy that is!

Temptation towards evil, seems to be present at every turn. Every time that one person chooses to commit adultery in their marriage, lie to another person, deceive and cheat another person, hurt them, rob or steal from them, love is the first thing that is cast aside, love towards God and love towards people . . . and in its place is personal selfish gain.

One might also argue, as did Adam and Eve, that the influences of other people, and the beguiling temptations of satan are too great for us to resist. And unfortunately, for many, that often seems true.

But in reality, it does not have to be true. We can have the ability to resist the temptations that come to us, but if and only when we have first gone back and reversed that first wrong choice that was made, the one by Adam and Eve where they chose to reject God as their Lord. If we turn and make the choice to have God back in our lives as our Savior and our Lord, then we will have all the power that we'll need to resist the temptations that confront us.

As God's Holy Spirit lives within you and me, He is ever and always faithful to warn us away from the temptation that's spoken about here in the Lord's Prayer. We are told in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that,

<sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Again, it is so very essential that we comprehend this special truth that God is revealing to us in those simple words of the Lord's Prayer and the words given in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. From that very first moment that you and I received Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we became one of God's beloved children. And as His beloved children, He is growing us up in the discipline of "knowing" and "loving" Him.

And that special discipline requires training, training in the ways of righteousness. And that training seems best accomplished through our encountering and resisting all the many temptations that the world, the flesh and the devil put along our pathway.

And folks, as we are told in the Book of Ephesians, this world that we live in truly is “dark” and it is dangerous, filled with the evil hosts of that dark world. And temptations from that world, the flesh and the devil are at every turn.

In the Book of Hebrews chapter 12, God explains to us that as His beloved children, it will be through discipline and chastisement that you and I will be trained up in the ways of righteousness and be able to withstand the dark and difficult ways and temptations that the world, the flesh and the devil throw at us.

And God revealed that to us so very clearly as His Holy Spirit led His own dearly beloved Son into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. While as the Son of God, Jesus did not need discipline or training in the ways of righteousness, but as the Son of Man, God was able to demonstrate to us that it is necessary for every “son of man” to endure temptations, and to respond by making right and righteous choices. To “choose life” instead of the ways of death.

And thanks be to God, because you and I are His beloved adopted sons, as we venture through and endure the dangers and the temptations of this dark world each day, by the power and the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit guiding us and protecting us, we will also be able to make those same right choices that the Lord Jesus made as He was tempted.

Before we close, let me say this again. That no, with our small minds, we might never know how or why God, our Father, uses the instruments that He uses in order to make us Holy. In this example, “temptations”. But He can, and He does. He really is able to use any instrument of His choosing and it does not make Him wrong for doing it.

God loves us! And as a Father who loves His children must always do, He will take us through whatever circumstances of life that He finds necessary to train us up in the ways of righteousness. And again, yes, as with “temptation”, some of those ways and methods that He will use will be difficult. But please know that God dearly loves us and that He Himself will never tempt us. And that He will always be available to help us through it all.

I’ll close with this encouragement from the Lord Jesus given in John chapter 16,  
<sup>33</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)



Let's pray!