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Lord's Prayer

Notes

Over Time (Practicing the Way)

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“Lead us Not into Temptation But Deliver Us From Evil.” I struggled the most with this phrase out of all of the Lord’s Prayer when sitting down to figure out what does this mean, what was Jesus saying here? I read a bunch of books but an article by a man named Paul Thigpen helped with this with phrase. But at first it took me back to the year 2003, which I’m going to take you with me to how I came to understand this phrase.

The summer of 2003 my sister had come home for a short spell, as I recollect, she must have been staying for the summer where she was going to university, but either way, she was home when all of a sudden she got sick. Shortly there after she was diagnosed with mono, and became quite ill. It was at this point that I remember we had drank out of the same cup just a few short days prior to her diagnosis. Sure enough, I started developing symptoms and was diagnosed with mono a couple weeks later, just days prior to entering my fourth and final year of my Math degree, where not only was I scheduled to take upper level

math courses, but also continue working on my thesis which I had just started that summer. Not long into the September I realized my body couldn't handle the load I had taken on, as mono was something that wouldn't be over in a few short weeks, suffering the effects for years, and I would even say, I have never had the same kind of energy again since. I had to withdraw from one of my upper level math courses and took a logic course instead, which I really enjoyed and learned a lot from. This course taught me things like, hypothetical syllogism (hang with me for a sec, I'll give you an example). It would be a valid logical argument, "if A then B, if B then C, therefore if A then C." So, here's an example,

- If it rains (A), then the ground gets wet (B)
- If the ground gets wet (B), then it becomes muddy (C)

Therefore, if it rains (A), then the ground becomes muddy (C)

Okay, so how does this all fit? Well, if a logical statement is true, then its opposite is false. I was struggling to understand exactly what "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," meant, which we'll unpack in a minute, but Paul Thigpen put it this way, "we need only change this petition into its opposite to realize what pride would be implied if we prayed instead. Here is what he put forward as the opposite: 'Go ahead Father: put us to the

test! After all, we know we can pass it.” The brazenness this would take.

I don’t know about you, but that is not something I could pray. As Paul continues, “Humility requires that we pray instead to be rescued. In short, ‘Lead us not into temptation’ is a confession of our weakness.”

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil is the last of the three petitions focusing on us in the Lord’s Prayer. The first one, “give us this day our daily bread” focused on our needs today, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” focused on the yesterdays with our past sins, and today’s “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,” focuses on the future, looking for guidance and protection. We pray to go for our yesterdays, todays, and tomorrows.

If we look to James 1:13–14 “No one, when tempted, should say, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it;” then what is Jesus saying when he is teaching “lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil” if God tempts no one?

Both the Lord’s Prayer and James use the same Greek term *peirasmos* in their writing, but the word has more than one meaning. While in today’s language temptation commonly

means “enticement to sin” the word can also mean test or trials.

Tests and trials involve enticement to sin. Think of this for example, when someone is going through a very painful circumstance they are tempted to doubt God’s goodness, or to walk away from faith altogether. Or you are persecuted, abused, or misunderstood by others, so instead of forgiving you grow bitter towards your perpetrators.

When James states that God tempts no one he’s meaning that God does not lure us into sin, but he may test us or allow us to be tested by adversity (think to Job, one of my favourite books in the Bible). The accompanying temptation, either the enticement to doubt or compromise, to grow bitter, does not come from God, but from either the devil or our own desires.

If you’ve raised children you know the apprehension and dismay but also the joy of watching young ones grow up. And you know that before one can run, one walks, before one leaps or jumps they run. As you grow it’s a case of learning by degrees. Each stage is a testing, trying, tumbling time. You’ve probably held the hand of a little one as they’ve steadied their feet, encouraging them to try again and again. This is just what our Father in heaven does with us. As we have assisted, helped, guided, encouraged children from one stage to another, this is our walk with

our heavenly Father. Every tendency to fall, every temptation to go down, every struggle to stand or walk or leap are not testing situations which we meet alone. Our Father is right there, ready and eager to extend His hand to help us the instant we need it. Our trials can be seen as challenges, testing encounters that can strengthen our determination to go on with God. As it says in James 1:2–4 “My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:12 “Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

And if you’ve come from a family of siblings, particularly if you had older ones, you know how important the older one can be to the younger one as a leader or teacher, in that the younger one will often follow the older one as they look to them as an example. I remember when Madi was around 9 months old and we were outside, I was cleaning things up in the yard while Madi was playing when all of a sudden I couldn’t find her. The yard was fenced in so I figured she couldn’t have gone far. Then I heard a shrill of laughter as I saw her body sliding down the slide in pure joy. The little rugrat had watched her brother for so long climb the

ladder to then slide down the slide that she decided it was her turn to try it. This was just shortly after learning to walk. She has often looked to her older brother for how to do things so that she can learn and then do herself.

Jesus came to live among us as a human for many reasons, one of which that we could follow his example. Jesus was led into temptation. If we read in Matthew 4:1 it says “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted, so when Jesus is praying “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,” he’s praying something he’s experienced. He was led into temptation, but he didn’t sin, he was delivered from the evil one. Since it is the Spirit, God, who leads Jesus to the place where he is to be tempted, we can pray today that this may not happen to us, that God will not lead us into temptation, as we say in the Lord’s Prayer. But at the same time, it is the devil who then tempts us, and therefore we must also ask God that when we are tested we have God’s strength and protection. We might not want these tests, but we recognize that they can be important in our faith journey. Some of the hardest “tests” or “trials” that I have gone through in my life have brought me the closest to God, and have shown me how much God is at work in my life. So, if they can be so good for us, why pray for them not to occur? Because in doing so it recognizes our human limitations or

vulnerabilities, and that we need God's protection to see us through.

Jesus says in John 16:33 "I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"

Never forget that out of what seems to be evil, God our Father can and does bring great good to His children. When we do encounter evil, we need not feel apprehensive. To the person walking with God his Father, there comes again and again the quiet assurance that all can be well. Our confidence lies, not in ourselves, nor in our ability to counteract evil but rather in the character and strength of our Father who delivers us. God can bring good out of any evil.

God can use temptation to reveal what is in our hearts, to allow us a choice that clarifies significant issues, to fortify our will, and so that we can provide an example for others and a witness of God's grace before His enemies. Our commitment to God and our ability to resist evil is strengthened every time we say yes to God and no to the devil or our own wrong desires.

If you think to the Israelites wandering in the wilderness, God often tested his people, and they often failed the test. As things got difficult they often complained to God, criticized Moses. So, why did God allow these times of

difficulty? God was testing the Israelites and revealing their own sinfulness to them. He was encouraging them to trust him and not to be afraid. These times of testing could have been a means of grace and blessing that would have increased their faith and their love for God. But their hearts were full of unbelief and their constant prayer was “How can we get out of this?” instead of “What can we get out of this?”

Just two weeks ago when I got smoked in the head with a volleyball, after the pain was gone, there came tears. I remember saying to God initially I didn't want to go through this again. But I also I knew he could and would lead me through it as he did the last ones. Things were just starting to get back to “normal” as there were things I was starting to incorporate into my life that I hadn't done in almost 4 years, I didn't want to start the healing process all over again, but I knew God would have a plan. I instantly prayed, God, please don't let this succumb to anything major, but for His will to be done. Though tests are useful, we still often ask to stay away from them because we recognize our own limitations, and we don't presume to be up to the test. In fact, we don't pray for temptation any more than we pray for adversity. Right after we say “lead us not into temptation”, we then say “deliver us” or “rescue us” because we dare not come close to evil. I know God can use it for his glory again, as he has everything else in the

past, I also knew I needed Him throughout it all.

As Warren Wiersbe put it, “When we pray ‘lead us not into temptation,’ we’re saying to the Lord, ‘Give me the faith I need to accept this trial and use it for your glory. Deepen my roots, increase my faith, and help me turn this testing into triumph and not temptation.’ Then we rest on his Word, because that is the source and strength of our faith.”

So what are you praying: “How can I get out of this?” or “What can I get out of this?” Would you pass the test?