

# Do Not Lead Us into Temptation, But Deliver us from the evil one

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*Jason A. Graham: The Disciples' Prayer Series*

**Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV)** <sup>9</sup>In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. <sup>10</sup>Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread. <sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This prayer, taught to the Disciples by Jesus, can lead us into revelation about God and about ourselves.

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## God Leads Us Into Temptation?

If not, then why would we have to ask Him not to? Well, if He does, then it must be His will. Why then would our Lord tell us to pray against the will of God?

That is what I was asking the Lord when it came to me that He would never tell us to pray against His own Will. So, the logical conclusion is that Jesus is telling us to pray for something that is already the will of God. So, is it not God's will to "lead us into temptation"? I mean Jesus himself was driven into the wilderness, by the Spirit of God, to be tempted by the devil. Was God acting outside of His own will when He did that?

These naturally become the questions that we ask. I believe a further look into the larger biblical witness will answer these questions and possibly many others.

But before we get into any of the rest of this I would like to make one thing perfectly clear. We must understand from the beginning that God Himself NEVER tempts us. God may allow things with us like He did with Job, but He never tempts man. Keep the following scripture in mind as we enter this study

**James 1:12-18 (NIV)** <sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. <sup>13</sup> When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; <sup>14</sup> but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. <sup>16</sup> Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. <sup>17</sup> Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. <sup>18</sup> He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

## Temptation or Testing?

Well, first of all, one quick concept to clear up these muddy waters is to understand a more full view of "temptation". This does not simply mean a strong drawing toward committing sin. A better translation of the word that brings more light to the topic is "testing". Testing or temptation is a trying of our faith. It is not a testing of our ability to withstand sin; rather it is a testing of our faith. This accomplishes a very important thing in our life: **perfection**.

Consider the words of James and Jesus in these two passages of scripture:

**James 1:2-4 (NKJV)** <sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

- The Trying of our faith works patience in us, which has a perfect work, which brings us into perfection and completion in Christ—lacking nothing.
- Also reread James 1:12-18 above.

**Luke 22:31-32 (NIV)** <sup>31</sup> "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. <sup>32</sup> But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

- Jesus makes it clear here that Peter's faith was on trial because He prayed for it to not fail.
- He then further indicates that this trial of faith would bring Peter to place of strength that would allow him to strengthen others as well.

So, if the trying of our faith is something that strengthens and perfects us, then why ask for it to not happen? Well, many scholars and theologians agree that Jesus is not instructing us to ask never to have our faith tested. There is an interpretive key that makes it all much clearer to our understanding.

### The Interpretive Key

The main thing that can begin to clear up many of these questions is to not ignore the next phrase that Jesus tells us to pray, "but deliver us from the evil one". We can't ignore the "but". This sheds greater light on what Jesus was saying. In the phrase "but deliver us from the evil one" we see that Jesus is instructing us to ask for an alternative to the first statement. If the alternative is to be delivered, then the first statement must carry with it the connotation of not being delivered. In other words, we are not simply asking to never go through any trying of our faith—we would never grow up if that was the case—on the contrary we are asking to not be overcome during the trials. We are praying for ourselves the way that Jesus prayed for Peter:

**Luke 22:32 (NIV)** But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

So, a more clear understanding of this portion of the prayer may read like this:

"God, don't allow us to be overcome in the trying of our faith—instead do the opposite of that—deliver us from the evil one."

### Knowing God's Will

Knowing God's will about our times of testing makes this clear to us.

**1 Corinthians 10:12-13 (NIV)** <sup>12</sup> So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! <sup>13</sup> No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

This makes it clear that we are praying according to God's will. We are asking to not be put into a temptation or trial without escape—BUT to be delivered from the evil one who would desire to destroy us under temptation.

## More about Temptation and Sin

Apart from explaining what I believe Jesus was conveying in the phrase “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”, I also wanted to speak more in general about the topics of temptation, testing, sin, rules, and mercy.

### What leads a person to sin?

James said that when a man is drawn away by his own lust and enticed, he is tempted.

This lust (or desire) can “conceive” and give birth to sin.

**James 1:14-15 (NIV)** <sup>14</sup> but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. <sup>15</sup> Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

The word, in the Greek, translated into “evil desires” or “lust” (in some translations) literally means “desire” or “longing”. It often has the connotation of being evil or not of good intent—but it doesn’t directly translate to that. As a matter of fact two of the most common forms of the word (epithymia and epithymeo) were used by Jesus when He said to His disciples that he “desired and longed” to eat the Passover meal with them.

### Is being tempted the same as sinning?

These desires can be good or bad—but having the desires themselves, and being tempted by them is not in itself and immediate sin. As a matter of fact, we know that Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit for the purpose of being tempted, but he did not sin.

**Matthew 4:1 (NIV)** Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

However, desire conceiving does lead to sin.

So, our feeling of desire, or struggle with it, to do something wrong does NOT automatically equal sin. However, it can give birth to sin in us.

### The Conception of Sin

Sin is conceived by evil desire.

Now “desire conceiving” can be leading you to an actual physical act or to setting your heart on something, as Jesus pointed out in the case of a man lusting after a woman:

**Matthew 5:27-28 (NIV)** <sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup> But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

So obviously, desire being conceived to give birth to sin does not always end in a physical act—it can and OFTEN IS simply a condition of the heart. Jesus was establishing new ideas for the new covenant, and the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

***He was putting greater emphasis on the heart!***

## The letter of the law versus the spirit of the law

The old law focused on outward behavior in the written code, but there was a spirit behind that written code that many of the people in Jesus' day—especially the Pharisees—failed to perceive. This is what Jesus was referring to above, and what Paul was referring to when he discussed us being ministers of the new covenant:

**2 Corinthians 3:6 (NIV)** <sup>6</sup>He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Following the letter of the law, meaning to live according to the written code without understanding the spirit behind it, leads to death.

## DOs and DONTs

Viewing your life in God or Christianity as a List of DOs and DONTs is following the Letter of the Law.

The Law of Moses, or the Law of Sin and Death, commonly lead to 3 types of people—in my opinion. Living by a list of DOs and DONTs did not lead to a thriving spiritual life in any of these cases:

1. Those who rebel against the list, and do whatever they want.
2. Those who respect the list, and desperately do all that they can to fix themselves to line up.
3. Those who feel like the list is not enough, and begin to add their own rules to it for everyone else to follow.

We'll discuss this more when we compare this to mercy.

## The Absolute Need for Mercy

This emphasizes to me the absolute need that we have for Mercy.

First of all, the mercy that God showed toward us in the sacrifice of his Son:

**Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)** <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved.

**1 John 4:9 (NIV)** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

And secondly, the mercy we must have on ourselves and others:

**Matthew 5:7 (NIV)** Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

**James 2:13 (NIV)** because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

**Galatians 6:1 (NIV)** Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

- The above three passages can lead us to this conclusion: If we want to triumph over judgment, then we MUST SHOW MERCY!

### Having Mercy versus Demanding Rule Keeping

You see, having mercy (the spirit of the law) versus following strict lists of DOs and DONTs (the letter of the law) both birth very different types of children.

#### **Mercy gives birth to lovers of God. Rule Keeping gives birth to sons of hell.**

**Luke 7:41-43 (NIV)** <sup>41</sup>"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup>Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup>Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

**Luke 7:47 (NIV)** Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

- Here Jesus explains the basic principle that "he who is forgiven much, loves much".

In contrast:

**Matthew 23:15 (NIV)** "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

- In this passage, Jesus tells the Pharisees—who were so focused on rule keeping that when they believed that they had met all the requirements of the law continued to make up their own rules on top of the law—that when they take their Rule Keeping and convert someone to their religion, that they make that person twice as much a son of hell as they are.

### Self-Righteousness and Legalism

These "sons of hell" end up being one of two very different types of people.

However, they have similarities as well. They both:

- Are very religious
- Are Legalistic—meaning they absolutely believe in a need to keep the rules
- Place their faith in their own ability to keep the rules over the mercy and grace of God

So, who are these two types of people?

- Self-righteous Pharisees
- Backsliders, or those who have been taught all the rules, and choose to walk away.
  - To be clear, I'm not talking about people who live in sin because they don't believe in God or because they believe that Christianity or religion in general is just a big deception. I'm talking about those who do believe in God, and even believe that

Christianity is the right way to live, but feel that they can't live that way, and choose not to try.

Although we see these as two very different types of people, the root of their condition is very often the exact same deception. They both believe you must keep the rules. The Pharisee believes he is good at it. The Backslider knows he is not.

They are both deceived into believing that their own righteousness is what can save them. The Pharisee believes they have the ability to accomplish this. The Backslider refuses to try because they feel they can't live up to it.

Both are extremely deceived, and both desperately need to see a clear display of mercy by believers. This will triumph over the judgment that they embrace in their hearts over every action they take.

### **So, is there no standard of behavior for Christians?**

This is the question that begins to eat away at many of us. We worry that if we tell people they don't have to keep the rules, that they will "live however they want".

Here is the issue with that: WE SHOULD WANT THEM TO LIVE HOWEVER THEY WANT!!!!

Why would I possibly say that? Because we want them to love God, to love righteousness, and to WANT to walk in holiness.

However, if we demand that they keep the rules instead of teach the truth about the mercy, kindness, and forgiveness of God will they WANT to live in true holiness? NO!

Mercy births lovers of God! Rule keeping births sons of hell!

Our response to want to demand rule keeping to enforce a standard of living for Christians results in: SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS! Not holiness.

The desire to want people to live holy is admirable, but the path we have often chosen to get them there is absolutely wrong.

### **Let them live however they want?**

Yes! And teach them about the love, mercy, and forgiveness of God. Not about keeping rules, so that they will begin to walk in true holiness.

So, many Christians do not trust the Holy Spirit to lead and guide into all truth, so we try to make sure everyone knows exactly how they should act.

- We correct every action.
- We incessantly demand people live up to our expectations.
- We judge harshly at the slightest misspoken word or difference in opinion.
- We pick apart every teaching to reveal anything that wasn't worded just right.
- We become doctrine correctors and fruit inspectors.

We should instead love people and show mercy no matter how they are living.

### Are there no absolutes?

So, we just let people think that whatever they want to do is ok? Is everything gray?

NO! God Forbid!

There are absolutes. We all must ABSOLUTELY walk in love and show mercy.

**1 John 4:1-21 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup>This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup>but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. <sup>4</sup>You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. <sup>5</sup>They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup>We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood. <sup>7</sup>Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. <sup>9</sup>This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. <sup>13</sup>We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. <sup>16</sup>And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup>In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because he first loved us. <sup>20</sup>If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

**Romans 5:1-21 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. <sup>6</sup>You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we



be saved from God's wrath through him! <sup>10</sup> For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! <sup>11</sup> Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-- <sup>13</sup> for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. <sup>15</sup> But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! <sup>16</sup> Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. <sup>17</sup> For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. <sup>19</sup> For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. <sup>20</sup> The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, <sup>21</sup> so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Romans 6:1-23 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup> What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? <sup>2</sup> By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? <sup>3</sup> Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. <sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. <sup>6</sup> For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. <sup>8</sup> Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. <sup>10</sup> The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> **For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.** <sup>15</sup> What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! <sup>16</sup> Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. <sup>18</sup> You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. <sup>19</sup> I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your

body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. <sup>20</sup> When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup> What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! <sup>22</sup> But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- So, we do not go on sinning.
- We don't let others think it is ok to sin. However:
  - We show mercy (Matthew 5:7)
  - We pray for them (1 John 5:16)
  - We restore them with meekness (Galatians 6:1)
  - We rely on God's love (1 John 4:16)—not our ability to keep the rules