

"The Protection of Prayer" - Part 7*Matthew 6:13***Introduction**

Every day we are bombarded with evil from a world that has been affected by sin. Whether it is comes from the natural realm in the form of a hurricane, earthquake, fire or accident; emotional realm expressed through anxiety and fear; or spiritual realm where a disruption in our relationship with God leads to all manner of chaos, it is through these words "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" that we ask God for His divine protection from the ensnarement of evil and sin.

One of the clearest definitions for temptation in the Bible comes from James 1:13-15. In this passage James writes, "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death." As we pray for God's protection, we first need to realize that temptation is an invitation that can only come from one of two sources, Satan and his demons or our own flesh. We must also remember that Satan's use of temptation is to always kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). No matter how enticing or appealing, the end goal of sin is always death.

Secondly, this also means that temptation never comes from God because He cannot be controlled in anyway by evil. So often, what feels like temptations are actually divinely appointed trials that God uses to deepen our faith and mature us spiritually. In James 1:2-4, we are told to "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Just as Abraham was tested with and passed the trial of presenting his son as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22), in like manner we also face small, medium and large tests in our lives. The depth of our faith is proven when we go through a trial and successfully pass the test that God has ordained for us.

However, trials can quickly become temptations. Being tempted is not a sin, but giving into our fleshly desires during these "testing" seasons, will open the door to sin. As sons and daughters of God, our still sin-contaminated flesh constantly battles with the Holy Spirit that indwells us. But, if we do not give into the desires of our flesh the doorway to sin will remain closed. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul tells us that God, in His divine mercy and grace, promises us that we will not be overtaken by temptation. This is wonderful news for every believer, because God promises to never tempt us with more than we can bear. No matter the situation, our Father will provide us with a pathway out so that we can endure it!

We cannot make it in this world on our own. We need God, our Father, to place His hedge of protection around us, just as He did for Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6), Peter while in prison (Acts 12), and Esther as she faced death in order to protect the Jewish people (Esther 4). When we pray for protection from temptation and evil God promises to deliver us, which should prompt us to give back to Him the praise, glory and honor that only He deserves.

Getting Started

1. How did this week's sermon affect your understanding of trials and temptations?
 2. Why is it important to "count it all joy" when going through a trial?
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Let's Get Personal

1. What temptations do you regularly battle? Share your response with your circle or group.
2. Do you blame God when you are faced with temptation? Why or why not?
3. How do you usually respond to temptation? Share your response with your circle or group.
4. When experiencing a trial, are you more prone to pray for God to remove it or pray for God to help you endure it? Explain your answer to the circle or group.
5. How do you think we can remain faithful to God in the midst of temptation? Share your response with your circle or group.

Take the Next Step

1. What is one step you can take this week to live in the victory that God has given you over temptation and sin?
2. Want to go deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Psalm 50:15; 91; Romans 7:14-20; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 6:10-17; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 1 John 2:16; 4:4.

Renew Your Mind

“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4
