

Call to Obedience # 432
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AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION,

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL (Matthew 10:13)

by Reimar Schultze

This portion of the Lord's Prayer, more than anything else, encourages us to petition our Father for mercy in our times of trouble. Now please notice that this petition has two parts to it. The first part deals with the temptations, trials and tests which originate from God. The second part deals with those temptations, trials and tests that originate from the devil. Let us now just deal with the first part: *And lead us not into temptation.*

This is one of the most difficult texts in the Bible and God's children have struggled with its true meaning for centuries. To clarify what Jesus means here, let us first observe what He does not mean in this text. Jesus does not mean that God will ever tempt us to sin as His dear brother James plainly affirms in his epistle: *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man* (James 1:13). Secondly, let us take note that the English word "temptation" can also be correctly translated from the Hebrew (*nasah*) and Greek (*peirazo*) to mean: "tests, trials and afflictions." Therefore putting this all together we can rephrase this petition to say: "Do not permit us to fail or to be tempted to sin in our hour of trial." In other words God does not tempt us, but He tries us. This position was also held by some of the apostolic fathers and fits well in the total context of the Bible on how God deals with men, for the idea of testing is one of the most essential principles in the Word of God.

The best known example of God testing man is in God testing Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen. 22:2), the best example of Satan testing man is found in the story of the fall (Gen. 3:1-19). But the difference between the two is that God tests man in order to strengthen His bond with him; the devil tests man to destroy him. In fact, this truth is at the very heart of this whole petition. Of course, we find no greater demonstration of this battle between heaven and hell for the souls of men than in the book of Job. So, God will try us in the furnace of affliction to make us more like unto Him. And the same God who takes us into trials, will also bring us out as we are being faithful (2 Peter 2:9) by not giving in to the world, the flesh and the devil. In other words,

it is like a schoolteacher who will test his students, but he will also help them to make the grade in order to advance them to a higher plain of living.

And it is by virtue of these trials sent by our Lord that we are privileged to become ...*partakers of Christ's sufferings...* (1 Peter 4:13) and become worthy to reign with Him forever (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 3:4). Yes, it is only in the fire of affliction and on the anvil of God's perfect will that our souls are being tempered and prepared for everlasting joy in the presence of our triune God, His holy angels and His white-robed saints. Following are a few Scriptures on the wisdom of God trying His saints:

1) *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son* (Heb. 11:17).

2) Job made the following statement: *But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold* (Job 23:10).

3) The Psalmist wrote: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes* (Ps. 119:71).

4) James remarked: *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him* (James 1:12).

Jesus also suffered and was tried at the hand of God. In fact, God slew Him to make Him the Savior of the world. Likewise, God wants to slay you to make something out of you, my friend.

Remember that Jesus prayed for deliverance in His trials and He admonishes us to do likewise: *Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared* (Heb. 5:7); ...*The servant is not greater than his lord...* (John 13:16).

One of the most prominent stories in the Bible concerning trials is the story of Joseph, whose life can best be described by these three words: tried, tested and triumphant. Joseph became an archetype of the Savior. It was not the devil's doing, but it was God's scheme to put Joseph into a pit, into slavery, and into Potiphar's house where he was falsely accused and cast into prison. These experiences put iron into his soul, and after his brothers had moved to Egypt, he could say to them: *But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive* (Gen. 50:20).

So, if you are truly the Lord's, you will be tested and tried like Joseph. But when you are in the heat of the battle, never pray any other way than the Lord Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, *...nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt* (Matt. 26:39). Never ask that the cup you are to drink be taken away from you (Matt. 26:42). If you do not get through at first in your Gethsemane, also pray more earnestly as your Lord did. Please remember that as God sent an angel to strengthen Jesus as He prayed, in the same way He has one for you if you persevere in your hour of tribulation.

There may also be times when God will have to bring an affliction into your life to deliver you from pride, self-conceit or neglect in spending time with Him. A shepherd will sometimes break a leg of the sheep that strays too far away from him. Likewise, your Shepherd will at times bring you into affliction to pull you back to His side. These following verses bear witness to this matter: *Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word* (Ps. 119:67); *I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God* (Jer. 31:18).

Often dear pastor, when you seem to have "success" in your ministry, when you have high numbers, you have the tendency to steal God's glory. You are tempted to revel in the praise of men and also begin to put yourself above others, often unawares. When you start acting like this, the Lord may have to "break your leg" spiritually speaking to restore that intimate relationship you had with Him before. For example, Moses became overconfident in himself in Egypt and therefore God sent him into the wilderness to tend sheep for 40 years in order to change him from being one of the proudest men into being the meekest man on the earth. Then, after leading the children of Israel for almost 40 years, in a moment of weakness and provocation, Moses again found himself with a spirit of pride, and after this disobedience, God removed him from his ministry altogether and retired him to paradise (Num. 20:8-12).

When God saw pride standing at the door of the Apostle Paul, He delivered him by sending him a thorn of affliction which helped this most precious servant to keep the anointing (2 Cor. 12:7-9). There are times when many of God's children get too busy with the mission of the Lord, neglecting their time with the Lord of the mission. When this happens to you, the Lord may have to send you hardships or He may have to lay you up on a sickbed to deliver you from yourself. God has done this with many pastors, missionaries and church workers.

Jesus Himself resisted becoming too busy with people at the cost of sacrificing prayer for His ministry. He knowingly disappointed them at times and told them that it was time for Him to talk to His Father. Remember this demonstrative passage on this point: *And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone* (Matt. 14:23).

Once you lose your ability and discipline to send things and even needy people away to make room for prayer, you might also be at the point where the Lord may have to afflict you to draw you back to His wounded side. But in all of these afflictions, never forget to draw the Lord with you into your struggle. He ever wants to be at your side hearing you pray: "Lord, help me." He is ever waiting for that call.

Oh, what condescending kindness this is that your Savior desires to be in a gracious partnership with you to help you win your battle against evil consistently! God considers your humanity. He understands your fear of pain, of failure and of disgrace in the time of testing. He will never leave the trusting heart and He will always send His rewards to you if you will only persevere in faith. Remember, it says that God: *...is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him* (Heb. 11:6). And finally, as you pray: *And lead us not into temptation*, remember that little word, "us." Pray this not only for yourself but also for all the company of the committed.

(This is an edited excerpt from the book Praying the Will of God by Reimar A.C. Schultze)

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