

September 20, 2020
Lord Prayer Series 2020 “Lead me not into temptation!”

There it was! On the counter sat a double-decker chocolate fudge cake for grandma’s birthday. The smell of the moist chocolate wafted through the house. The fudge was dripping down the sides with loads of cookie crumble dusted on top. Their stomachs growled and ached at the sight of such a perfect looking cake! After 15 minutes of staring, the two children started daring each other to sneak a bite. As if they needed any more temptation! Sadly, you usually do not think about the consequences until the third piece. Temptation can be difficult to overcome. If you think your favorite dessert is hard to resist, it hardly compares to the temptations we face in our spiritual lives. Today, our focus is the 6th petition of the Lord’s prayer, “Lead me not into temptation.” Before we continue, we need to get one fact straight. God never tempts anyone. He cannot! He is perfect and holy. He cannot be in the presence of sin, let alone cause it. 3 dangerous spiritual enemies do tempt you. They want nothing more than to rip you from your Savior and have you fall into sin and despair. Satan whispers his lies, trying to get us to doubt God’s promises. This world pushes its ungodly morality on us. Our sinful nature struggles to walk away from the path God laid out for us. These 3 enemies are constantly attacking us from every angle. Do not be mistaken; we are outnumbered, outmatched, and outclassed in every way on our own. We need help! Without it, we are doomed. But where can we get such help against these deadly foes? Look to Jesus! Lead us not into temptation! That prayer is not us inviting Jesus to our side, but Jesus invites us to him. Jesus wants to be our safety and protection.

Satan likes his lies. He tries to get you and me to think that Jesus can’t really help us because he can’t understand what we go through. A person living in the jungles of South America would not understand the temptation to scream at drivers cutting them off. Jesus was God! He had no sinful nature, never sinned, nor did he desire to. Can Jesus understand how hard it is not to be angry and blow up at the family member, co-worker, or fellow church member who has a different political opinion than us? Jesus cannot possibly know what it’s like to live in fear and worry every day as this pandemic throws our whole lives out of whack. What does Jesus know about that temptation to put my family, hobbies, and possession before God in my heart? Satan holds this doubt in our face like a chocolate cake we are not supposed to touch. Satan’s goal is to get you to doubt Jesus and think you must handle temptation alone. He knows that once you try, you will be helpless prey before him. It works too, doesn’t it? You know the sins you have fallen into again and again. You know what it is like to try so hard to overcome temptation but fail over and over. Jesus, lead me not into temptation!

The one who invites you to himself is not some out-there god that has no clue what you go through. God was willing to walk as one of us. God took on flesh Jesus was led to that desert as we read in Matthew 11, to be the sole focus of Satan’s attacks for 40 days! Jesus felt hunger from not eating all that time. Satan jumped on that opportunity by tempting Jesus’ flesh. Just make some bread out of these rocks Jesus! You are hungry. If you are the Son of God, you can do it! See, Satan was trying to get Jesus to doubt that his Heavenly Father would provide. Satan used the same schemes he uses against you. Satan showed Jesus every treasure of the world. All Jesus had to do was bow down once. It would all be his! Sounds pretty tempting, doesn’t it? Finally, Satan tried getting Jesus to test God by jumping off the top of the temple. Prove you are the son of God Jesus! God said he would not let you get hurt. What a gross misuse of God’s Word and these were just three of the endless temptations your Savior endure. Jesus was tempted the rest of his life. Satan wanted nothing more than Jesus to fall into sin. Hebrews 11 makes it clear how much experience Jesus has, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are...”

Satan had one goal. He wanted Jesus to slip just once. It does not seem like a big deal, right? We all slip at least once occasion. One slip and Jesus could not have been the Savior you needed. One slip and Jesus would not have been able to be the perfect sacrifice that you needed to take away your guilt and shame. One sin and Jesus would have been as wretched as we are. Salvation would have been lost. Not only did Jesus face every temptation we have but the stakes were much higher. Jesus loves you so much. The author to the Hebrews tells us that, “he did not sin.” Jesus endured every relentless attack Satan could hurl at him. He did it willingly so that he could die as the perfect lamb, sacrificed to pay for your every sin. He was completely innocent and that means his blood has cleaned up every moment you fell into temptation! He was perfect so that he could suffer the punishment you deserved. God died so you could live forever! Jesus never and that means you are now sinless in God’s eyes! You are saved. You can run to Jesus’ open arms and know he is the

Savior that knows exactly what you are going through! You confidently pray, "Lead me not into temptation" knowing that Jesus has already made you guiltless by his perfect life and innocent death. My brothers, my sisters, there is nothing you face that your Savior did not already perfectly endure for you! That is your confidence.

Knowing what Jesus did for us does not mean we can rest easy. Temptation is a constant this side of heaven. We are still in enemy territory and our enemy will continue to attack us from all sides. We will be tempted to lose heart, to become exhausted and to feel hopeless. Ever feel like an animal surrounded by wolves with no escape in sight? The battle against temptation can feel hopeless. We get done with one battle just to start the next. We go from fear and worry because of pandemic and move to anger and hateful words because of differing political opinions. In this life, temptations will never leave us. That is why we pray, "Lead us not into temptation" in church, in our homes, and as we go through our day. We need this prayer at the tips of our tongues and the edges of our hearts! We know what Jesus has done but Satan is deadly efficient at tempting us. He has had thousands of years of experience. He wants us to feel alone in our fight. He wants us to feel like that helpless animal that is surrounded by wolves, hopeless and afraid. I do not know about you, but I certainly have felt that way at times. In those moments it is so easy to think we need to work hard. We need to just avoid the sin and work through it. It is one of us and only us!

Can you imagine what it was like for a soldier to go into the trenches, land on the beaches, or parachute from the choppers in enemy territory! That is a lot like our lives as Christians. But you know, soldiers do not go into battle alone. Soldiers storm beaches hold positions and defeat the enemy with their brothers in arms. Knowing that you have a brother watching your back or ready to jump on a grenade for you allows you to fight with everything you have. You have a brother in arms. You have a brother who jumps into the trenches of spiritual warfare with you. You have a brother who stands at your back and is ready to fight off any enemy that would cause you harm. You fight the good fight with your brother Jesus fighting on your behalf! Jesus is the brother in arms that gives us the strength to endure the enemy's temptations. As they move to surround you, Jesus is right there as your impenetrable shield. Jesus is not an ordinary brother in arms. Jesus is one who already won the war! Think about that for a second. Jesus is the one who crushed Satan's head as he gave up his innocent life on the cross. Jesus is the warrior who tells you not to fear this world because he already conquered the world! Jesus assures you that your sinful nature has no power over you because he drowned it in your baptism. So, we pray, "Lead me not into temptation!" Jesus responds by giving you this guarantee in 2 Thessalonians 3, "the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one." You have an impenetrable shield that stands before you and behind you. You will not fall, and you will not lose because the victory is won.

When you are tempted to click that lustful link on your computer, when those shameful thoughts suddenly appear in your mind, when your rage boils over, or you have doubt in your heart; take Jesus at his word. When you feel surround and hopeless remember the promise Jesus makes you in 1 Cor 10, "God is faithful...when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." Remember who Jesus is. He is your faithful God. He will never fall asleep on you; he will never lose focus nor will he slack off for a single second. Your faithful God has promised that there will always way out. There will always be a way to overcome your enemies' luring temptations. There are no hopeless situations for you who believe. No-win situations do not exist for you who stand with the Lord of Lord and King of Kings. Jesus is your strength to fight the good fight. He gives you the power to wield the weapon Satan cannot stand against, the active and living word of God. Your strength is not in you but in the eternal victor that conquered Satan's temptations and promised to make you victorious too! Jesus is your strength and he will not let you down. Temptations will come but so Jesus' help to endure. Your enemies will surround you, but Jesus will stand at your side always.

Lead us not into temptation. I will not promise that the chocolate cake will be any less tempting. Your God does promise that you can rely on the perfect life of Jesus for our Salvation. Your Savior promises he won the war and stands with you against every temptation. Pray with confidence, my friends. With Jesus by your side, Satan, the world, and your sinful flesh do not stand a chance. The victory is won, and Salvation is yours. That is what it means to pray, "Lead me not into temptation!" Amen.