

The Sermon on the Mount
Lead Us Not Into Temptation (Part 2)
Matthew 6:13
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Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church

This week, I read a story about a folk bandit called Jose Rivera. Maybe you've heard the story of Jose Rivera. He became notorious in several little towns in Texas near the border for coming across and robbing their banks and businesses. Well eventually, the townspeople in these towns, there, became weary of the sort of constant plundering. And so they hired a Texas Ranger to track down Jose Rivera in his hideout in Mexico and to retrieve the money and jewels that had been taken. As Zacharias writes: "The ranger at last arrived at a desolate, ramshackle cantina. At the counter, he saw a young man enjoying his brew. At one of the tables, hands over his ample stomach, hat over his eyes, snored another patron. The ranger approached the young man at the bar and announced that he was there on a mission--a mission to bring back Jose Rivera, dead or alive. 'Can you help me find him?' he asked. The young man smiled, pointed to the other patron, and said, 'That is Jose Rivera.' The ranger ambled over to the sleeping bandit, tapped him on the shoulder, and asked him, 'Are you Jose Rivera?' The man mumbled, 'No speak English.' So the ranger beckoned to the young man to help him communicate his mission. The ensuing conversation was tedious. First the ranger spoke in English and the young man translated into Spanish. Jose responded in Spanish, and the young man repeated the answer in English for the ranger. Finally, the ranger warned Jose Rivera that he had only two choices. The first was to let him know where all the loot he had stolen was hidden, in which case he could walk away a free man. The second choice was that if he would not reveal where the money was stashed, he would be shot dead instantly. The young man translated the ultimatum. Jose Rivera, now sobered, pulled himself together and said to the young man, 'Tell him to go out of the bar, turn to the right, go about a mile and he will see a well. Near the well, he will see a very tall tree. Beside the trunk of that tree is a large concrete slab. He'll need help in removing it, but under that slab is a pit in the ground. If he carefully uncovers it, he'll find all of the jewelry and most of the money that I have taken.' The young man turned to the ranger, opened his mouth. . . swallowed. . . paused. . .and then said, 'Jose Rivera says... Jose Rivera says... 'Go ahead and shoot!'" Now that's temptation.

Every Christian understands what it's like to be tempted. In fact, C.S. Lewis wrote these insightful words about temptation: "No man knows how bad he is until he has tried very hard to be good." Listen to that quote again: "No man knows how bad he is until he has tried very hard

to be good.” Lewis goes on to say: “A silly idea is current that good people do not know what temptation means. That’s an obvious lie. Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only man who knows to the full what temptation means.”

Our Lord not only understands temptation, but He knows how to conquer it. And so we’d better listen to Him, and follow His direction for dealing with our own temptation as it’s delivered to us here in the Lord’s Prayer. I invite you to turn to Matthew 6 again, and let me read for you once again this magnificent model prayer. I hope its words are burned into your soul and its meaning has enriched your understanding greatly. Matthew 6:9.

Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’

We’re studying the second half of this prayer in which we learn how to pray for our own needs. I noted for you that the fourth petition, “Give us this day our daily bread”, deals with praying for, asking God for, all of the physical needs that we have in this life. We understand this. And frankly, we often pray in this regard. But the last two petitions, the fifth and sixth petitions, deal with our spiritual needs. And all too often, we neglect these petitions, especially the final one. Notice verse 13: “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Jesus says you need to pray not only in the fifth petition to be forgiven for sin in the past, but you also need to pray in the final petition to be preserved from sin in the future. Simply put, this final petition is a prayer for personal holiness.

Now as we’ve noted, this is really one request with two parts, or we could say two sides. There is the negative side – we are to pray for spiritual protection from sin, and there is the positive side – we are to pray for the increase of personal holiness. Now we, last time, began to look at the negative side--the first half of verse 13, in which we learned we are to pray for protection from sin. Notice verse 13 again, the first few words: “Lead us not into temptation...” This is a prayer for protection for our souls from sin.

Now we looked at the meaning of temptation, that word that Jesus uses here, and we discovered that the Greek word for *temptation* and its family of related words has two primary senses. It’s used in these two ways throughout the Scripture. First of all, it is used as an external test or trial to determine or to strengthen the quality of a person. In other words, this is something that comes from God and comes with good purposes in mind. A great example of this sense of this word comes in Deuteronomy 8:16 where the Septuagint uses this same family of Greek words and we read this: “In the wilderness God fed you manna. . . that He might *test* you, to do good for you in the end.” This is what a test or a trial is always about. It’s from God, intended to do us good,

intended to bring about strengthening of our souls, or to reveal to us and to others who we really are.

There's a second sense, however, in which this word, the Greek word translated *temptation* in our text is used throughout Scripture, and it's for an internal solicitation to sin. You can see this sense in James 1:14 where James writes: "Each one is *tempted* (*same family of words, each one is tempted*) when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. And lust, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, produces death." Obviously in that context, there's no positive. It doesn't come from God. It's not for good purpose. Instead, in this context, this sense of the word is used as something for evil meant to cause us to sin.

Now because of the context here in Matthew chapter 6, the translators understood that Jesus was using the second sense of this Greek word – not an external test or trial, but rather an internal solicitation to evil. And so they correctly chose the English word that best corresponds to that sense – *temptation*.

The question, though, is where does this temptation, this internal solicitation to sin, come from? We each experience it, but where does it come from? There are three primary sources, we saw last week, from which temptation comes. First of all, there is the flesh. That is simply our unredeemed humanness. Now according to Romans 8:8, unbelievers are "in the flesh"; that is, they are all flesh. They are completely unredeemed humanness. But Romans 8:9 (the very next verse) says that believers "are not in the flesh but in the Spirit..." We are no longer dominated by, controlled by the flesh, but the flesh is still in us. There is a part of us, only a part now as believers, that is unredeemed. And it is from that part of us that is unredeemed, that the Bible calls our flesh, that evil cravings (according to James 1:14) spring up from within that part of us that's unredeemed and become a source of temptation to us. You've experienced that. You understand that.

There's a second source of temptation we discovered, and that is the world. This is the evil system that Satan has created, that, according to 1 John 2, is primarily driven by three ideas. In whatever age you live, these are the three ideas that control the world system. There is the lust of the flesh; that is, a craving to satisfy the physical appetites of the body. Satan has created a system that plays to that. Secondly, there is the lust of the eyes; there is the craving for what your eyes see. This is materialism – the desire to own and possess and to have. And finally the boastful pride of life – that has to do with one's reputation, with being somebody and being thought to be somebody, and living so that people think you're somebody. These three great ideas constitute the world system that Satan has created. Turn on your television, read your newspaper and you will discover these three concepts drive everything in our world. This is the system Satan has created. And out of that system, we are regularly bombarded with temptations to do those things.

There's a third source of temptation, and that is the devil. All of the temptations that we experience can ultimately be traced back to Satan. Why do I say that? Well, the flesh – what's the source of the flesh, our unredeemed humanness? Ultimately, it is stamped with Satan's own character. Jesus says in John 8:44, "You (*who are unbelievers*) do the desires of your father. (*meaning Satan*)" Some of the temptations that we have come from the world system, but it's the world system that who created? Satan created. And so in a sense, all of our temptations come from Satan. But this third category, what I mean by this, is some of the temptations that we experience come directly to us from personally tailored circumstances that Satan and his demons create. Listen, Satan knows your weaknesses. He knows what will make you fall. And he creates through his empire of evil spirits circumstances intended to tempt you.

Now those are the three sources of temptation. What I want you to understand is that, when you look at your own temptations, sometimes those temptations come from only one of those sources, but I think that's uncommon. I think most of the time the temptations you and I encounter come from a combination of those sources at the same time--sometimes all three of them. Let me give you an example, a biblical example. What about Judas? Judas was tempted to betray Christ. Where did that temptation come from? What were the sources of Judas' temptation to betray Christ? Well, John 13:2 says the devil placed it in his heart. It came directly as a temptation from the devil. But he was also tempted by the world system. There were the Pharisees who were willing to offer him money. There was the desire to possess and to have. And the Pharisees played to that, played off of that. That was part of the world system. But in addition to that, there was already resident within Judas, in his flesh, what the Scripture says was a heart of greed and covetousness. He kept the money bag because he was a man who was given to greed. So the temptation to betray Christ came to Judas from all three of those sources at the same time, and I think often that's true of us as well.

Let me give you an assignment this week. I want you to think about, meditate on, this week, what are the three to five temptations that give you the greatest trouble in your life. What are the three to five recurring temptations that seem to dog you your entire life? And then I want you to think about and ask yourself, What is most frequently the source or sources of each of those temptations? Because I think understanding this and knowing this helps us be pre-armed and therefore able to deal with them successfully.

So on the negative side of this petition we've seen the meaning of temptation, the sources of temptation. Let's look thirdly at the prayer for protection. And this brings us to the heart of this verse. Go back again to Matthew 6 and the first part of verse 13: "And do not lead us into temptation..." That is a prayer for spiritual protection. Now you understand there's great theology behind this prayer. There is, behind this prayer, an understanding of God's universal sovereignty and providence, because you don't ask God to protect you if you don't believe He has control over all things. There's also an understanding behind this prayer of our own pathetic weakness: God, I am not able, in and of myself, to deal with these spiritual attacks. And in

addition, there is an understanding behind this request of God's boundless mercy. We understand that, as A.W. Pink says: "God would be perfectly just if He allowed us to be completely swallowed up by sin and destroyed by Satan." You understand that? God would be just if He just gave you over to your sin. But God doesn't do that because He's a God of compassion and mercy. "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him," the psalmist says. And so we know that, and that moves us to cry out to God: "Lead us not into temptation..."

Now look at that word *lead*. It literally means to bring or to carry. It's used in the New Testament of causing someone to enter into a certain condition. So literally, Jesus says we are to ask the Father: Father, don't cause us to enter into a circumstance that becomes a solicitation to evil. Now if you're a thinking person, and I hope you're thinking with me, that raises a key question. Why do we even need to pray this? I mean, God doesn't tempt anyone to sin, does He? James 1:13 says: "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God'; for God is untemptable, neither tempts He any man." Listen. Understand God has never and will never act with the purpose of tempting you or anyone else to sin. That's the role of our own lusts and of the world system and Satan. But here's where you need to put on your thinking cap, because God is sovereign, and that means that everything that enters our lives has only to come under His permission.

Now I want us to step back from our text just a moment and wrestle with this. So stick with me. This is foundational. Once we've gotten this, we'll know what Jesus is saying to pray. So let's consider what is God's relationship, then, to temptation? If He doesn't tempt us, what is His relationship to temptation? Well, the Bible gives us several answers. First of all, God never tempts us to sin, but God sovereignly permits temptation--uses it for His own purposes and directs it to His own ends. You know, sometimes our flesh can turn the circumstances that God brings into our life for good into a source of temptation. But there are other times when God allows Satan to bring temptation into our lives. There are several biblical examples. I quoted one to you last week. Let me remind you of 1 Chronicles 21:1. It says: "Satan stood up against Israel and (*Satan*) moved David to number Israel. (*to take that census which was just a reflection of David's pride. He was depending on the size of the army rather than on God.*)" But it says Satan moved David to take that census. Now listen to the parallel passage in 2 Samuel 24:1. "Now again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He incited David against them to say, 'Go, number Israel and Judah.'" Now how do you reconcile the fact that in one passage it says Satan moved David to number, and in the other passage it says God incited David to number the people? Here's how you reconcile it, with this very principle. God sovereignly allows Satan to bring temptation for His own purposes and to accomplish His own ends.

Let me show you another example. Go back to Job again. We looked at this briefly last week, but go to Job 1. You know the story of course. Satan comes in before the presence of God. God points out Job and says, 'Have you considered Job?' And Satan says, 'Well, of course he serves

You. I mean, look at what You've done. Look at how You've blessed him. Look at how You've preserved and protected him.' But notice verse 11. Satan says to God (now remember this is Satan talking to God about Job.) Verse 11.

But put forth Your (*capital 'Y', Your hand God, put forth Your*) hand now and touch all that he has; and he will surely curse You to Your face.' Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your power (*lowercase 'y'*), only do not put forth your hand on him (*that is, on his body, on his person*).' So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord."

And this is exactly what he did. He wreaks havoc in Job's life. What was Satan's purpose? To get Job to become angry and bitter through his difficult circumstances and to curse God. Satan's role in this was *temptation*. But how was Satan allowed to do it? Under the permission of God because God had good purposes, other purposes. And of course, we benefit from that because we have the book of Job and we read it and we see how the suffering of man and the sovereignty of God intersects. But it was God permitting Satan to bring temptation for His own purposes and to direct it to His own ends.

Consider our Lord in Matthew 4:1 where it says: "Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness (*to be what?*) to be tempted by the devil." God the Spirit directed Jesus into a circumstance where God then permitted Satan to bring temptation.

Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:7 – you remember, because of the vision of heaven that he had seen: "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh..." Now there's a lot of debate about what that thorn in the flesh was. I'm not going to resolve that today except to say that whether it's some physical problem or whether it was a person in the Corinthian church, one of the false apostles, doesn't really matter. Notice it's a thorn in the flesh and then he says this: "...a messenger of Satan to torment me (*and then he ends the verse, 2 Corinthians 12:7 with these words*) to keep me from exalting myself!" Do you see how Paul is looking at the same circumstance from two different perspectives? He says on the one hand this thorn in the flesh is a messenger from Satan to torment me. On the other hand, at the same time, it's a messenger from God to keep me from pride and exalting myself, to keep me humble.

Listen. God doesn't tempt anyone to sin, but He does allow temptation in your life for His own purposes. And we shouldn't be surprised about this. I mean, Scripture tells us that God uses Satan in a variety of ways. He uses him to judge sinners. He uses him to refine the saints as we see in Job's life, to discipline the rebellious in the church. In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul says I've delivered that incestuous man over to Satan. God uses Satan to further purify obedient believers as He did with Paul – sent him a thorn in the flesh. So we need to understand that God sovereignly allows temptation in our lives for His own purposes and to His own ends.

Secondly. Here's another way His being relates to temptation. God sometimes overrules our desires to give in to temptation and He keeps us from sinning. There are times when we want to sin and God intervenes to prevent us from sinning. You see this in 1 Samuel 25:26. Abigail says to David: the Lord has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand. Abigail says, Listen. David, you were angry because of Nabal, the fool. And you were tempted to take his life, which would have been sin for you. But God restrained you from carrying out that temptation. And God does the same thing with us at times.

There's a third relationship God has to temptation, and that is He strengthens us to endure temptation without sinning. 1 Corinthians 10:13, a familiar verse: "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; *(that doesn't mean the person sitting next to you has exactly the same temptations you have, but it means: when you look at humanity, there are no unique temptations. There are people all around this planet who struggle with the exact same temptations you do. You are not alone)* and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." Now what is the way to escape? It's not a unique way with every temptation. There's only one way he's talking about here, and that is: He will strengthen you so that the way of escape is through the temptation without giving in. You will endure it without sinning. God can equip you and enable you to do that.

There's a fourth relationship God has to temptation, and that is God ultimately uses all temptation for our good, even when we have given in to temptation and sinned. Romans 8:28. "God causes *(what?)* all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." You say, wait a minute. How can God use the temptation in my life and, even when I give in to that temptation and sin, how can God use that for good? I love the Puritans. They talk about this a lot and they say one way is to show you your sin. We need to understand how sinful we are. And when God withholds His restraining influences – He allows temptation, He allows us to give in – we see ourselves. That's what happened with some of these biblical examples. God allowed temptation into David's life to show him his pride. God allowed temptation into Job's life to show him his self-righteousness so that at the end of the book he says: "I repent in sackcloth and ashes." I thought I knew God. I thought I had an argument against God, but He's God and I'm not. God uses temptation as He did in the life of Peter to show us our self-confidence and our need to depend on God instead. Peter says: Huh, they may all forsake You, Lord, but not me. Peter needed to see himself and his need.

That brings me to another way that God uses temptation for good in our lives – not only to show us ourselves, but also to show us our need of God and our need of grace. A.W. Pink writes: "God often permits Satan to assault and harass us in order to humble us, to drive us to Himself, and to glorify Himself by manifesting more fully to us His preserving power." God wants you to see yourself, and He also wants you to see how desperately you need Him, and He uses temptation to that end.

So with that brief understanding of God's relationship to temptation, let's go back now to Matthew 6 and let's ask this question. In light of that, when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," what exactly are we praying? What are we asking God to do? Several things. First of all, we're asking Him to keep us, by His providence, from being tempted to sin: God, don't let me be tempted. Turn to Mark 14. We looked at this a few weeks ago in our study of Mark's gospel. Mark 14:37. Of course, this is in Gethsemane. Jesus has been praying. He comes back. He finds the three – Peter, James and John – sleeping.

And He said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? *(And then He says this. Mark this verse. Star this verse. This is Jesus' prescription for how to deal with temptation. He says) Keep watching (keep on the alert) and keep praying that you may not come into temptation; (by the way, this is exactly what Jesus was doing as He was facing the temptation in the Garden. And He says this --and this wasn't true of Him, it's true of us. Verse 38) the spirit is willing, (that is, that new, redeemed person that you are is willing. It wants to do the right thing) but the flesh (the fallen part of you) is weak.*

And so you'd better keep watching and you'd better keep praying.

I wish there were time for me to really work through this. In fact, I would encourage you. Go back and go online or get a CD and listen to the message that I did on this. I think it's called *Gethsemane Part 2* because the first part I dealt with Jesus' temptation. The second part, *Gethsemane Part 2*, I dealt with how to pray in the midst of temptation. Jesus is a great model in His prayer in this passage for how we ought to pray in the midst of temptation. So go back and catch up with that. But essentially, Jesus is saying to the disciples here and to us in the Lord's Prayer: Ask God to preserve and protect you from temptation that will cause you to fall. In other words, ask God to overrule the influence of the world system in your life. Jesus prayed this in John 17:15 – "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." That's what you're praying: God, protect me from the world system Satan's created. Don't let it tempt me. You're asking God to subdue your flesh. Psalm 119:133: "Establish my footsteps in Your word, and do not let any iniquity have dominion over me." God, don't let my sin rule me. Don't let my flesh create cause for sin.

You're also asking God to restrain the devil, to restrain Satan. 1 John 5:18: "We know that no one who is born of God *(no Christian habitually, without repentance)* keeps on sinning; but He who was born of God *(capital H--speaking of Christ; Christ who was born of God)* keeps the believer, and the evil one does not touch him." Restrain Satan in my life, Lord. Restrain my flesh. Restrain the influence of the world system and keep me from temptation. This is a recognition of our desperate need of God and His intervention. John Calvin writes: "We conclude from this petition that we have no strength for living a holy life, except so far as we obtain it from God. Whoever implores the assistance of God to overcome temptations

acknowledges that unless God deliver him, he will be constantly falling.” I think this is the main point of what our Lord’s teaching us to pray in the first half of this petition.

But I think there is also implied in this petition a couple of other parts. I think we are also praying when we say “Lead us not into temptation” that, if in fact we are tempted, we’re asking God to enable us by the work of His Spirit to stand against that temptation and not to choose to sin. 2 Peter 2:9 – “The Lord knows how to rescue (*how to snatch*) the godly from temptation...”

There’s a third part of this prayer I think that’s implied and that is, if we are tempted and if we do give in to that temptation and sin, we’re asking God to keep us from being overcome by that sin, and to enable us to quickly repent, and that He will in the end use that even for our spiritual good. It’s David’s prayer in Psalm 51 when he says:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. . .
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. (*a spirit that longs to follow You and obey You and to do what’s right*)

So that’s the negative side of this sixth petition “Lead us not into temptation...” Lord, providentially preserve, protect and keep me from any temptation that will cause me to fall into sin. But if I do fall into sin, protect me from being captured by that sin, being mastered by that sin, from being destroyed by that sin.

Now there’s another side to this prayer and it’s the positive side. We’ve seen the negative side. Let’s look at the positive side. Jesus teaches us here to pray for personal holiness – not merely protection from sin, but for personal holiness. Notice again Matthew 6:13. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Now as I mentioned last week, the Greek word translated *but* is much stronger than our English word. It could be translated: ‘Lead us not into temptation, but rather, on the other hand, deliver us from evil.’ Now what does Jesus mean by evil? The Greek construction could legitimately mean two different things. It could mean evil in a general sense as it’s translated here: “deliver us from evil.” In this context, this would mean: Lord, deliver me from the temptations that come from the world, the flesh and the devil. Deliver me from the sin that results from giving in to those temptations. Deliver me from evil in a general sense. The Greek could also mean, not evil in a general sense, but specifically the evil one: Deliver me from Satan. Now you’ll notice that the footnote in your Bible on verse 13 puts that in the margin. You have one or both in the margin, and the translators do this so that you can have confidence in the Scriptures because between one of those expressions you have the Scripture, and so you can know what the Bible’s actually saying. So which is it likely here? Well, there are a number of arguments I’m not going to get into. I lean toward it being the evil one, but I will say this. Calvin was right. It, in the end, doesn’t really matter, because all evil finds its source in Satan. So in the end, it’s a prayer for the same thing whichever it is.

Look at the word *deliver*. That word means to rescue or to preserve from danger. Rescue me, God. Preserve me from the evil one. Now as we did with the first half of this petition, the negative side, let's ask ourselves with this positive side what it means to pray, "Deliver us from evil"? It really means two things. First of all, it means to ask God to deliver us gradually right now from all of our spiritual enemies – from Satan and all that he brings. In other words, it is a prayer for sanctification. It is a prayer that in a gradual, ongoing way, God would deliver your soul from all of the evil influences, and give you increasing holiness. It's what our Lord prayed in John 17:17 – "Sanctify them by means of the truth; Your word is truth." Make them progressively more and more holy. That's what we're praying: Lord, deliver me from the evil one. Loosen his hold and influence in my life, and make me increasingly holy. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul says: "May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely..." In all parts of your being, may God be at work making you holy, setting you apart unto holiness. 2 Thessalonians 3:3: "The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one." Right here, right now.

But there's a second part of this prayer. Not only is it a prayer for sanctification, but it is a prayer that asks God to deliver us entirely, in the future, from all of our spiritual enemies. In other words, it's a prayer for glorification. Not only do I want to gradually grow more and more holy right now, but God, someday deliver me completely and entirely even from the (not the power of sin, but even the) presence of sin. This is the second half of 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; (*that's sanctification, that's right now, but then Paul goes on to say*) and may your spirit and soul and body (*your entire being*) be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." That's glorification. That's: "God, someday deliver me completely and entirely from everything that smacks of sin."

Listen. If you pray this prayer, this sixth petition from your heart, it means that you not only want to be protected from temptation and evil, but it means that you want God to do whatever it takes in your life to make you more holy. D.A. Carson writes: "This is how we could paraphrase it: 'Lead us not into temptation, but away from it into righteousness.'" "God, may You providentially direct my life and my circumstances, not only so that I see a decreasing pattern of sin and temptation, but may I see an increasing pattern of holiness as well. Don't just keep me from sin. Make me holy. At its core, this is a prayer that God will produce in us Christ-likeness. That's what you're really praying. You're saying: God, progressively now and entirely in the future, I want You to make me like Your Son."

Now when you see this request, when you hear that, what hope do you really have and do I really have, of truly being victorious over sin and temptation in our lives? And the answer is, in and of ourselves, no hope. But our hope is in Christ. What does He say in John 15:5? "...apart from Me you can do nothing (*nothing*)."

Do you understand that your victory over temptation comes in Christ? He showed us how to be victorious over temptation. Hebrews 4:15 – "We don't have a high priest who can't sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who's been tempted in

all things as we are (*in every category of sin you're tempted, Jesus was tempted*), yet without sin." He understands how to be victorious over temptation. And He died to free you from the power of sin in your life. Do you understand that He didn't just die to deal with your guilt? He died to deal with the power of sin in your life. Read Revelation 1:5 – "He loosed us from our sins in His own blood..." He died to loose you from the power of sin in your life.

And when you're in the middle of temptation, He helps you. Listen to Hebrews 4:16. Since He's been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin, ". . .let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may find mercy and find grace to help in the time of our need." What's the time of our need? The time of temptation, when He's able to help.

Here's really an encouraging point. He prays for your personal holiness. Jesus, your Lord, prays before the Father for your personal holiness. He does collectively for all of us as His people. John 17:15. He says: "Father, I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one." Verse 17: "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." Jesus prays for all of us collectively that we will be progressively holy. But here's the really encouraging part to me. He prays for us individually by name. You say what's the basis for that? The basis is what He did for Peter in Luke 22:31: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; (*he wants to bring temptation into your life that will destroy you. Listen to Jesus*) but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail;" Just as He prayed for Peter by name individually, He prays and intercedes for you before the Father when you face temptation. You have great hope that temptation can be defeated in your life because Jesus has gone ahead of you.

So what are some of the practical steps that we can take in light of this sixth and final petition? Let me give you some thoughts. I want you to jot these down. Think about them. You can fill them out on your own this week. Here are some things that you and I need to do. First of all, ask God to develop in your heart a hatred of sin, a desire for holiness, and a spirit of dependence. A hatred for sin – do you understand that the first step toward sanctification is hating sin, and you can't do that on your own? You can't make yourself hate sin. So ask God to develop a hatred of sin in your heart, and a desire for holiness, and a spirit of dependence that realizes you can't do this on your own.

Secondly, ask God (in keeping with what we've just studied, ask God) to preserve you from any temptation that would cause you to fall into sin. And on the other side of that, ask God to rescue you when you do choose to sin and you do disobey.

Number three: ask God to direct your circumstances toward personal holiness. Ask God to make you holy. Ask God to produce in you the likeness of His Son. Ask God to give you the fruit of the Spirit.

Number four: identify and avoid all the circumstances that tempt you to sin. You see, while we are to pray in the midst of temptation, we also are responsible to act. Colossians 3:5 says we must put our sin to death. Romans 13:14 says: “we must make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts.” 2 Timothy 2:22 says: “Run from youthful lusts...” A.W. Pink says: “What we pray for, we must endeavor to practice. We mock God if we ask Him to deliver us from evil and then trifle with sin or recklessly rush into the place of temptation.” Listen. Don’t you dare pray this petition and then continue to have your circumstances such that it’s something you fall into easily, because you have arranged your circumstances in a way that makes sin easy. Arrange your life and circumstances in a way that makes sin hard.

Number five: study and meditate on God’s Word. Psalm 119:11. “Your word I have treasured in my heart, *(it’s not just memorizing, although it’s partly memorizing. It’s treasuring. It’s memorizing and studying and meditating on and applying. Your word I have treasured in my heart)* that I may not sin against You.” We see this in our Lord’s example. This is how He responded to temptation – by quoting the Scripture.

And finally, listen to the series I did on sanctification back on Sunday night now several years ago because you need to understand how God makes you progressively holy and what your part, what your role in that is.

I want you to turn with me as we close our time to Jude. Jude closes his letter, our Lord’s half-brother closes his letter with these wonderful words. Let these words be your confidence as you face temptation in your own life. Jude 24:

Now to Him *(that is, God)* who is able to keep you from stumbling, *(that’s talking about this life, that’s talking about sanctification now. God is able to keep you from stumbling into sin. And He is able)* to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, *(that’s glorification, that’s the future. God is able to do both of these things. Verse 25)* to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”

Don’t lose your confidence in God. And when you find yourself every day praying, pray: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Let’s pray together.

Father, for those of us who are in Christ, I pray that You would burn the meaning of this petition into our souls and may it be a constant friend, a constant companion. May we, every day, pour out our dependence on You for personal holiness – for protection from sin on the one hand, and for the pursuit of holiness on the other. And Father, I pray that You would help us to take the steps You’ve commanded us to take in addition to praying. Lord, don’t let us be presumptuous and ask You to deliver us when, at the same time, we’re making every imaginable provision to sin.

Father, I pray as well for those who are here this morning who are in slavery to their sin, who've never come to the freedom that's in Christ. Whatever they may claim, whatever the prayer they may have prayed or aisle they may have walked, they're still enslaved to sin. Father, I pray that this would be the day when they come to truly know Jesus Christ, whom to know aright is life everlasting – the One who gave Himself for us and who loosed us from our sins by His own blood. May they come to know Him even today. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.