

SERMON: MATTHEW 6:9-13 and LUKE 11:2-4**FATHER, STEER US AWAY FROM SATAN'S TESTS**

*Our Father Who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. **And lead us not into temptation.** But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.* (COMMON WORDING OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.)

Do you know of someone who “threw it all away”? Or someone who is on the path of throwing it all away? Someone whom the Lord has given many blessings? Such as, the gambler who loses big-dollar after big-dollar, the physically strong who succumbs to wild living, the alcoholic who has been so diligent to stay away from drink but now is caught up in it again, the able father-mother-son-daughter hopelessly snared by drugs, the responsible spouse with wandering eyes? To throw it all away is sad.

In the Lord's Prayer we have humbly acknowledged that through Jesus, God is our Father and is the center of our lives. We ask Him that His most honorable name and reputation be treasured among us, that His kingdom of salvation come to us through the Word now by faith and forever in heaven, that His will which is best be done whether we understand it or not because His will ever seeks our presence in heaven through Christ, that His generous loving hand would supply all our daily needs in this life for which we are thankful, that His forgiveness in love and mercy wipe away all our sins freely and undeservedly. Then today we look at the 6th Petition. Jesus, teaches us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” “Father, lead us so that we do not throw it all away. That is what the devil wants—to separate us from You, dear Father, through rebellion and rejection of Your Son, so that we spend eternity in hell with him.

“Father, lead us not into temptation.” The line of thought and the sense is clear—Father, don't let the devil tempt us, so as to get us away from You. The root of the word “tempt” means to “test” or to “try.” A manufacturer may test, try, or “prove” his products. Rigorous demands are made on them to see how well they stand up. Does the devil tempt you to see how well you stand up? No. His goal is not to see how much you can take. His goal is to BREAK you. To get you to fail—maybe not all at once—but that is his goal. The devil tempted Eve and got her to fail. Then Adam. The devil tempted Jesus while on earth. He wanted Him to fail; He did not.

The devil's temptations to break you never come with an announcement—“Say, Ron, I'm here to get you to fail.” “Say, Barb, I'll see you next week to get you to fail.” The devil's temptations come when you least expect it, sometimes when you have just congratulated yourself on how well you're doing against sin! He's sneaky and smart. He means business like a hunting, roaring lion. You know he's around but you aren't ready when he comes. The devil uses different tactics—one is brute force, like he did with Job. He took away his flocks, herds, and livestock; his servants and his dear children; even Job's own health. His goal, to get Job to “curse God and die”—to break him and lead him from the Lord. Job did not. Sometimes the devil comes with bald-faced lies. He told Eve straight out, “You will not surely die!” Lie, lie, lie. She broke. Sometimes he uses half-truths, or shall we say half-lies. He told Jesus, “Jump! from the temple top! God has promised to send His angels to guard you; you won't get hurt.” True, and not true. God has promised to guard us, but it is not right to “dare” God. Jesus did not break. Sometimes the devil uses the allure of “fun.” The Children of Israel turned away from the Lord to worship the gods of the Canaanites around them—much more appealing. They broke. In the end, the devil's plan with every temptation is to get a person to think, “I know more than God.” “My friend here, the devil, or the wicked world around me, or my weak-kneed flesh, have shown me how bad God is.”

Against such foolhardiness, against such inducements to throw it all away, we pray, “Father lead us not into temptation. Steer us away from temptations of Satan.” One could say it's like walking down the street in a bad section of a large city. You're holding your father's hand. You see creepy, undesirable, people walking next to you and meeting you. They look at you strangely. You squeeze your father's hand tighter and say, Dad, don't take me too close to them. I am not safe around them. Dad, pick me up and carry me. Indeed, *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations* (II Peter 2:9).

What kinds of temptations and sins are there? (1) Sins of thought, word, and deed. If the devil can't get you to do it with your hands, then with your mouth (the mouth can be an awful cesspool sometimes). And if not with your mouth, then with your mind. The devil likes to fuel sins of the mind. They stew and grow there. Hate, lust, anger, greed, grudges, envy. (2) Also there are temptations to sin by doing something that you shouldn't. Then

there are temptations to sin by not doing what you should (sins of commission and sins of omission.) (3) There are temptations to sin willfully and on purpose. There are temptations to sin out of weakness. All accomplish the devil's plan—to break you, for the moment or ultimately forever, from God. No sin is acceptable with God.

We pray, “Father, keep us from turning against You, against Your Son our Savior, and against Your Holy Spirit our Counselor. Don't let us be out-manuevered by the devil, lest we throw it all away.” Can you fight the devil on your own? No. *We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).* We are no match. What can be done? *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand . . . Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:13, 17).* Be armed with the Word of God; read it, study it, learn it; and be ready to take your stand. It's not easy to take a stand against those who oppose. Parents know. When the little ones, or the big ones, keep saying, “Can I? Can I?” Can I? I want, I want, I want!” with tears, it's hard to hold your ground. With Satan, the tugging and pressure to conform is even worse. But abide with the Lord. Run to His Word He will help you against temptations of Satan seeking to break your love for Him.

How do you keep you focus on the Word? What can you do when temptation comes? First, remember what the Word of God says about the situation. Read the Word, dig deeper, ponder. Second, Pray! Pray for strength, persistence, courage, a willingness to be different, a desire to serve your Savior. Third, get away from the temptation! Get away! Fourth, find something else to do; get busy! Idle hands and an idle mind are the devil's workshop. Fifth, keep good friends; don't run with a bad crowd. Sixth, talk to a friend in Christ, a brother or sister, father or mother, pastor or Sunday School teacher, who will point you to the Lord. Seventh, remember the devil's long term goal, which he is satisfied to reach in small increments. He wants to BREAK you and separate you from salvation in Jesus. *Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7).* He does not voluntarily walk away.

Will you succeed against Him? Not always. You are a sinner. Does that mean you should just shut down and quit trying, since you're going to sin anyway? No, don't. That is giving the devil an open route to your heart and soul. Each day when you look at how you've failed, turn to Jesus and His mercy and love for forgiveness. Remember His words, *There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine ^{that} just persons who need no repentance (Luke 15:7).* With comfort in your heart, set out to do battle again tomorrow.

But there's a lurking question. Don't the words “Lead us not into temptation” seem to say, “Father, don't tempt me to do wrong”? Which doesn't make sense at all. No. The Bible says, *Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone (James 1:13).* God does not tempt us to sin—period. Yet doesn't the “old” King James Version of the Bible say, *And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* Did God want Abraham to kill his son?! That sounds so wrong. What's up with that?

The root meaning of “tempt” is to test or to try. God does not “test” you to see how much you can take (He already knows that). Nor does God tempt you like Satan to break you. God “tests” you to make you stronger. Like the wind oppresses the grass and the wheat, but then it makes the stalks stand stronger. Like daily work makes the arms and legs grow stronger. The Lord's goal in testing Abraham was to lead Abraham to trust Him more than ever before. The book of Hebrews tells us that Abraham went onward to sacrifice Isaac knowing full well that God had already promised that the Savior would come through Isaac's seed. In even stronger faith and trust Abraham was convinced that if he put his son to death, God would raise him back to life! That is trust! That was God's goal. God's testing is always for our good. In the 6th Petition we are not talking about good testing, as if “Father, don't make my faith stronger.”

We are saying, Father protect me from temptation by Satan. I can't fight him on my own. Even now I fail daily. Forgive me for Jesus' sake. Don't let me throw it all away. As Paul writes, *The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 7:19, 24-25).*

In the Small Catechism Martin Luther says: Lead us not into temptation. *What does this mean?* God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh would not deceive us or lead us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice. And though we are assailed by them, we pray that we may finally overcome and win the victory.

In Jesus, we have the victory!

Amen! So be it! Pastor Kanzenbach---