

Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer Part 3

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 6:9-13

Preached on: Sunday, June 16, 2013

What a privilege it is to come together and worship the Lord by immersing ourselves in his infallible Word. Will you take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 6. We conclude our study today of Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer, a topic that is so crucial for spiritual growth and protection and blessing and I rejoice that so many of you, over the past few weeks, have expressed such profound conviction with respect to what the Spirit of God has been teaching. And I pray that this will lead to true repentance, otherwise, it will lead to severe chastening. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by ignoring his work of grace in your heart.

Let's read, once again, Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer beginning in verse 9 of Matthew 6, he says, "Pray, then, in this way: '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 debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"

By way of review, we see here that Jesus has given us an outline for prayer, not a prayer and this can be divided into two sections, each having three petitions. The first section addresses the glory of God and we are, therefore, to pray with respect to his name, his kingdom and his will. And then, secondly, we have a section that addresses our needs, petitions related to our daily bread, that is, our dependence on God, forgiveness which speaks of our debts to God and then, finally, what we look at today, protection from temptation which addresses the issue of our need for defense by God. And I pray that the Spirit will empower my feeble thoughts because, frankly, this is a profound passage of Scripture that I believe is seldom understood correctly. And I fear that today I'll only be able to scratch the surface.

But, unfortunately, most believers and maybe you're in this category, have really never given much thought to this final section of Our Lord's Pattern for Prayer. "Do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil." Really, what does this mean? Why is this important? Why don't we ever hear this as a prayer request when we come together? Do you include this in your prayers? Again, most do not understand the importance of this petition nor do we tend to see the frightening dangers that await those who do not passionately and persistently pray this prayer with the proper theology and the proper heart attitude behind it.

I wish to approach this text, this morning, by examining four things: first, we want to have an accurate understanding of what Jesus is really saying; and secondly, we want to understand the nature of temptation; thirdly, the danger of entering into temptation; and then, fourthly and finally, the only means to avoid entering into temptation.

Now, before we look at this, may I say that because of the deceitfulness of the human heart and the power of Satan to deceive, most of what will be revealed today will fall on deaf ears. Each of us have an innate inability to conform to the moral character and

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desires of God. That is the essence of our very fallen nature. We are like Teflon when confronted with truth, nothing sticks. Our natural tendency is to hear something and then get defensive and blame shift and disregard rather than humbling ourselves before the teaching of the Word of God with a contrite spirit and trembling at his Word. We are all hopelessly biased in our own favor and shamelessly in favor of our bias. So, bear that in mind as we approach the Word this morning. I have prayed that the Spirit of God will help us see ourselves as we really are.

So, first, we must understand what Jesus is really saying. Again, verse 13, "And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil." Now, some might be confused and say, "Why would we pray for something God would never do?" Because after all, in James 1:13, we read, "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." Moreover, some would say, "Well, why pray for God to lead us into that which we should count as joy?" James 1:2-3, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance."

So, what is he really saying here? Well, first, you must understand that in the original language the root of the word "temptation" denotes a trial or a test and here it relates to a trial or a test that would cause us to succumb to the weakness of our flesh and fall into sin. So, think of it this way, this is a prayer against presumption. This is a humble recognition of our own weakness, our proclivity to sin. As the Psalmist said in Psalm 19:13, "Keep Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me."

So, in effect, what Jesus is asking us to do here is to be brutally honest with ourselves. With the reality that not only because of the weakness of our flesh but because of the greatness of our sin, we should cry out to the Lord to not allow us to come in to some situation that would cause us to fall into sin. "Father, I'm praying that you will help me here. I fear the evil in my own heart, it is desperately wicked, it is deceitful. Father, I fear the frailty of my flesh because I am attracted to sin like a moth to a flame. Father, I fear the evil that is in the world because it is so appealing to my fleshly appetites. The lust of my eye, the lust of my flesh, the boastful pride of life that just encompasses all that I am. Father, I know that in myself I am no match for evil. So, I have no confidence, I have no resources in myself. I beg you if it be according to your will that you not lead me into some trial that is so great that I might enter into temptation and fall into sin." My friends, it's as if we're saying, "Keep me from that which I abhor, that which I fear because I know how it can bring such great misery into my life but worse yet, I know how sin can cause a breach in our fellowship, in our relationship with our Father and that is the greatest sorrow of all."

So, ask yourself, Is this a theme in your prayer life? Well, God never tempts, he never seduces us to do evil. He does test, he tests us to prove our faithfulness to him. Even Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan. Therefore, in Hebrews 4:15, we read that "we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." And you will recall, that later

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when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he said, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." He was absolutely horror struck with the thought of taking sin upon himself and yet, he went on to say, "Yet, not as I will but as Thou wilt."

You know, Christian, none of us should be so foolish as to presume that we are any match for even the smallest temptation although it's all around us. This is why the Lord prayed for us in his high priestly prayer in John 17:15, "I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." Martin Luther summarized this well when he said, "We cannot help being exposed to the assaults but we pray that we may not fall and perish under them."

So, my friends, this is a petition that lays hold of that promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13, that says, "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." This is also to be obedient to what the Lord told his disciples to pray in the Garden. In Matthew 26:41, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. The Spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." John MacArthur summarized it well when he said, "This petition is a safeguard against presumption and a false sense of security and self-sufficiency."

So, again, I would ask you, Is this a theme in your prayer life? Is this an ongoing concern that causes you to watch and pray lest you enter into temptation? If not, why not? Has not the Lord made it clear here that this should be a priority in our prayer life. May I answer for you because I've had to answer for myself as well? The reason why this typically is not a priority is because we simply don't see the need. We tend to have a false sense of security. Very often, because of the deceitfulness of our hearts, we believe that we are sufficient in and of ourselves and we simply don't see the danger that is around us and that is within us. We tend not to be able to really see the weaknesses of our flesh and so many times we're not only walking on the very edge of the slippery slope of temptation, many times we actually slide right down into sin.

Often we can't see our own sin because it seems so necessary, so appropriate, so justified. Sometimes we blame it on our personality, that's our big excuse. Sin manifests itself often in our interpersonal style of relating and we don't see how we impact others. For example, one person may see themselves as a great leader, an initiator and a developer, you know, a person that is the mover and shaker, whereas in reality what's going on is they are a demanding, arrogant, control freak that wants the spotlight on themselves, that resents authority and is filled with pride. Or you see the sweet, gentle, humble, shy, quiet person and you say, "Oh, isn't that wonderful." Well, it may be but many times what that is covering up is a very angry person that fears man more than God and is filled with fear and lives under the guise of self-protection. And on and on it goes.

So, often we can't see our sin and sometimes when we see it, we don't want to deal with it because we love it so much. We don't want to give it up. Even as believers, it's easy for us to, once again, place ourselves back into the bondage of some life dominating sin. Like

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unbelievers, we can suddenly fall into the trap of fearing man more than God and just not having any fear of God at all and worshipping idols in our hearts. Dear friends, please hear me: until a man fears God, he only plays the fool. What a dreadful thing to enter into temptation, to presume upon God's grace. What an appalling thing to be like a dog that would return once again to its vomit. What an awful thing to live in the storm of divine chastening and think that it's normal. Dear Christian, we must remember that God is as just as he is merciful and he will not allow sin to go unpunished even in his children. So, we've got to learn to cry out to the Lord as David did, "Examine me, O Lord, and try me, test my mind and my heart. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there be any wicked way in me."

And we must learn to pray for ourselves personally as well as each other corporately. Notice, it says, "Do not lead *us* into temptation but deliver *us* from evil." Corporately, it's a concern because, you see, your sin will splatter on everybody around you. So, we pray, "Lord, I know my weaknesses and I know that there's weaknesses within me that I can't even see. Lord, I fear the seriousness and the consequences of sin, so please keep me far from the slippery slope of temptation that would cause me to fall in some great abyss of sin, that would ultimately begin to define my character." Because, you see friends, that's what sin will do. It will begin to define who you are and you will be known as the sluggard or the gossip or the glutton or the drunkard or the drug addict or the control freak or the liar or the fornicator or the adulterer or the hothead, the abuser, the greedy materialist, the filthy talking vulgarian and on and on it goes.

"Deliver us from temptation," and he says, "do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil." Think about that, that's the priority here. "Help me to walk by the Spirit and not carry out the desires of the flesh. Help me to put off sin, help me to put on Christ, put on the whole armor of God, to treasure your Word in my heart that I might not sin against Thee. To submit to God," as James says, literally, "submit to his Word. Resist the devil and he will flee from me," and on and on it goes.

Now, beloved, if these things never cross your mind, then you probably do not understand the second important consideration in this text and that is the nature of temptation. As we look at it in this context, we see that temptation is any thing, it's any opportunity, any situation, any condition that might entice us to sin. Then, of course, there are a myriad of examples of this. But it's important for you to understand that temptation can spring from within us as well as outside of us. The seduction from within has to do with our lusts. James 1:14, says, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." Lust is that deep, aggressive desire that we have for something. The term "carried away" in the original language denotes a dragging away by an inner desire. It was actually a hunting term used to describe a baited trap designed to entice unsuspecting prey. Do you realize that that's within you? Within your lusts?

He says not only are we carried away but we are enticed by our lust. Enticed was a fishing term used to define the bait used to catch a fish. So, think about it, our lusts within us have the power to carry us away, to entice us to act wickedly. An amazing thing about

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it, it can do that while at the same time convincing us that what we're doing is ok, that there are really no consequences that are that severe, that it really doesn't dishonor God. In fact, the things that we pursue with respect to sin, actually are fulfilling to us. These things satisfy our fleshly desires. The temptation from within are often overlooked. Let me give you an example: Peter uses this term "entice" to describe the depravity of false teachers, those who he says have "eyes full of adultery, that never cease from sin," catch this, "enticing unstable souls having a heart trained in greed accursed children." Enticing unstable souls, appealing to their lusts with some irresistible bait.

My friend, how well do you know your heart? Jesus said that "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart and those defile the man for out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." Jeremiah testified that "the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it?" The reality is, we can't. We need supernatural help. So, we pray, "Father, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." And as we continue to immerse ourselves in the Word of God, we begin to understand more and more of who we are and who he is and how we should live out our lives, how we can defeat the enemy within and the enemy outside of us.

So, let's think about the enemy outside. These are the things of the world that appeal to the evil that already exists within us. 1 John 2:15-16 speaks of this, it's the lust of the flesh, it appeals to the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life. You see, our heart is like a magnet that attracts the corruption that's all around us. Think of the tempting deceptions of false teachers. They are in our bookstores, they are in our televisions, they are on the radio waves, on the internet. Peter described them as those who through "arrogant words of vanity," here's the word again, "entice by fleshly desires," by sensuality.

It's interesting, Paul describes Satan as the hinderer as well as the tempter in 1 Thessalonians and he warns us not to allow Satan's world system to shape us into its image. You remember, in Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world." Do not allow it to unwittingly shape you into its mold. You know, it's interesting, you can take a cucumber and you can place it in vinegar, leave it there for a while and pull it out and it's still a cucumber. My friends, if you leave that cucumber in there too long, it becomes a pickle and that's what happens to us in the world. Satan and his minions know our individual weaknesses, they study precisely how, when and where to set the snare of some great trial to entangle us and defeat us with sin.

You will recall in Luke 22:31, Jesus said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." You see, Peter was blind to his arrogant sense of self-sufficiency. His heart was filled with pride and Satan saw that vulnerability. And Peter said, "Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death." He said, "Even though all may fall away because of you, I will never fall away." So, the Tempter merely laid in wait for his prey and in the courtyard of the High Priest, he tested him in the area of his greatest weakness and he failed the test and denied Christ three times.

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I recall when I lived in British Columbia, there was a certain mountain ridge that I would ride and I was warned from down below that on that ridge there are some game trails that look like they could save you a lot of time but they begin to move down towards a shale slide. Now, if you've not been in the mountains, you might not know about shale slides. Actually, they're a lot of fun if you can see the bottom; you can actually kind of run down the mountain and every step is about 30 feet as you kind of slip and slide all the way down. But, because of this particular shale slide, if you were to get on it, there's the danger of the shale beginning to slip and you begin to slide and the whole thing begins to slide and it looks like a gentle slope but it picks up momentum to a 300 foot cliff and they told me of several people that had made that mistake. And I remember the first time I came to that spot, it was a hot day and I thought, boy, my horses are tired, they're thirsty, I'm tired, I want to get back to camp and I can see this trail, I can see where it's going to go, this looks like the right way to go. I don't want to have to go up around these rocks and that ridge over there, but I did and I'm glad I did. I give you that as an example because so often we find ourselves seeing a different way to go and not heeding the warning that God has given us. And how often he warns us of the dangerous shale slides of this world, trails that seem so appealing. The entertainment that we enjoy, the music that we like to listen to, the crowd that we like to hang around, the way we spend our time, the things that we look at on the internet, the things that we post on the internet and on and on it goes.

Now, the good news is, we know that according to 1 Corinthians 10:13, there is "No temptation that has overtaken you but such as is common to man; 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." But, O child of God, knowing our weakness, knowing the danger of sin, how important it is for us to confess this and say, "O Lord, please do not lead me into temptation. I fear it." By the way, it was for this reason, the very verse before the one I just read, Paul says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he..." What? "Lest he fall."

Remember friends, we have two enemies: our flesh and Satan and his world system. All those temptations out there that appeal to our flesh and bring us to destruction. And Satan knows exactly the types of things you crave; he knows exactly where to set his trap, where to destroy you, where to render you useless for the sake of Christ or to destroy your family. He attacks our minds with lies. He attacks our emotions by animating them towards things that would destroy us. And he activates our wills to rebel. Once again, appealing to those three categories of lust described in 1 John 2:16: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life. John says, "It's not from the Father but is from the world."

You would recall, in Genesis 3:6, what happened to Eve. There we read, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food," there's the lust of the flesh, "and that it was a delight to the eyes," there is the lust of the eyes, "and that the tree was desirable to make one wise," there's the pride of life, "she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave

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also to her husband with her, and he ate.” This is the same strategy that Satan used with Jesus when he tempted him in the wilderness. You will recall that he appealed first to his flesh: he was hungry and he says, “If you’re the Son of God tell these stones to become bread.” He appealed to his eyes: he showed him all of the kingdoms of the world and said, “All of these can be yours if you will but worship me.” And he even tried to appeal to the pride of life which didn’t exist in Jesus. He says, “Dive off the pinnacle of this temple and the angels will rescue you and then everyone will know that you are the Messiah and worship you.” But, unlike our Savior, dear friends, that could not sin, our nature is so fallen it prefers sin to righteousness.

I have never seen a parent have any need to teach their children to be foolish because it’s bound up in their heart. You don’t have to teach a child not to obey authority, that comes natural. It comes natural to all of us and it’s for this reason that the first beginnings of temptation are imperceptible. Moreover, they are actually plausible to us. Beyond our power to see sometimes, beyond our power to argue against, they are delicious to our fleshly appetites. All the more reason to avoid it altogether. I like to think of it this way, temptations are merely the fuel that can ignite the burning embers of lust that glow within the heart. Peter’s vain confidence covered up the embers of his cowardice and insecurity but the fuel of persecution set them ablaze. The embers of Achan’s greed exploded into a roaring flame when tempted by the gas of forbidden spoils. You will recall that the embers of David’s sexual appetite and violence against those who might oppose him, was suddenly set into full blaze and began to rage out of control when he gazed upon Bathsheba’s nudity. The embers of Demas’ lusts burned hot when ignited by the temptations of worldliness even though he was serving with the Apostle Paul. The embers of Diotrephes’ lust for power and prestige within the church burst into full flame when confronted with the authority of the apostles. I would ask you, What embers await full flame in your heart? Are you aware of the kinds of temptations that might ignite that which is within you? Perhaps some of them are raging out of control right now. And sometimes it’s raging out of control and we don’t even know it. Those are the most dangerous ones of all. A great 17th century Puritan, theologian, John Owen, said this, “A man knows not the pride, fury, madness of a corruption until it meets with a suitable temptation.”

So, thirdly, we need to understand the danger of entering into temptation. In order to understand this, I would take your minds to Matthew 26. Remember in the Garden of Gethsemane? There we read that Jesus, being deeply grieved to the point of death, stationed Peter and James and John in a particular area and he asked them to “keep watch with him,” verse 38. Keep watch. Watch over what? Over temptation. Over the temptation to run and to hide and maybe to lash out in anger. Maybe to lose faith. Maybe to believe some lie. And then the text says that he went on beyond them to a place of solitude and he fell on his face and prayed that the Father would spare him of drinking the bitter cup of divine wrath. And as we read that text, we see that three times he returned to his disciples only to find them asleep. Indifferent to his agony, they were unconcerned about their own vulnerability to temptation and then Jesus warned them in verse 41, “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is

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willing, but the flesh is weak." But instead of watching and praying, the frightened disciples collapsed in defeat and cried themselves to sleep.

By the way, what a perfect illustration of all of us when we find ourselves in some great distress. Their eyes were heavy with tears of sadness and confusion and fear, they were oblivious to all of the dangers that were around them. In fact, Luke 22:45 tells us that they were "sleeping from sorrow." And, my friends, as a result of this, they entered into temptation. They began to trust in themselves, not in God. The fear began to envelope them and as a result they succumbed to it, to a carnal fear that rendered them both useless and miserable.

Where have you entered into temptation? Think of those who have entered into the temptation of greedy materialism that is so characteristic of our culture. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6, beginning in verse 9, "But those who want to get rich," there's the lust, "fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many a pain." You say, "Well, I'm glad that one doesn't apply to me." Really? What's your credit card balance? How much money do you owe? How do you spend your money? What occupies your thinking?

Again, John Owen wrote this in 1658, "Entering into temptation may be seen in the lesser degrees of it as for instance when the heart begins to secretly like the matter of the temptation and is content to feed it and increase it by any ways that it may without downright sin. In particular, a man begins to be in repute for piety, wisdom, learning or the like, he is spoken of much to that purpose and his heart is tickled to hear it and his pride and ambition affected with it. If this man now with all his strength ply the things from whence his repute and esteem and glory among men do spring with a secret eye to have it increased, he is entering into temptation. Which if he take not heed will quickly render him a slave of lust."

Let me give you some subtle ways that you need to examine, that will help you see when you may be entering into temptation, maybe when you've already entered it and you've been entangled in some wickedness from which there seems to be no escape. When we, first of all, mitigate the seriousness and the consequence of a temptation, and the sin, our lust will conceive and birth. In other words, when we move towards something that we know is dishonoring to the Lord and we say, "You know, it's not that bad. Everyone's doing it." Maybe we look to someone we really respect and he or she is doing it. Or we begin to say to ourselves, "You know, my good really outweighs the bad. And it's not like I do this all the time." My friends, if that's your attitude, you've entered into temptation. You know, the heart can offer a thousand compelling rationalizations as to why something is ok and not one of them be true. Not one of them. More often than not, the smallest sins are more deadly than the greater sins because, you see, the smaller sins are so imperceptible. They do not startle the soul but it's like taking in a bacteria but then that bacteria begins to multiply. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Friends, please

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hear this: there is more evil in the smallest sin than the greatest triumph. "We must abstain from every form of evil," 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

Let me give you another way that you will know when you've entered into temptation, when you silence the alarm of your conscience over some temptation by appealing to ungodly voices that will justify your action. In other words, when you look for a second opinion outside the Word of God, to get somebody else to say, "You know, that's ok."

Or, thirdly, when you justify some sinful compromise on some things by convincing yourself that a small evil is vindicated if it produces a greater good, you've entered into temptation. For example, when you laugh at the dirty jokes and you run with the worldly crowd for the greater good of "leading them to Christ." Or when you compromise or contextualize the gospel to somehow be appealing to the lost so that you can get them to come to your church and on and on it goes.

A fourth example: when you justify the neglect of the very best, most important duties of the Christian life because you are so heavenly invested in other things that you enjoy more. Take the man that spends all of his time with his career, with his work, because, after all, "I have to provide for my family," and yet he neglects teaching his children and shepherding his wife. Or the woman who spends all her time caring for her children, as a good mother should do, and yet has no desire to care for her own spiritual growth and development.

A fifth example: when we rehearse certain sins in our mind and treasure them in our imagination. Take the young woman who fantasizes in her mind about turning heads when she comes into the church or the classroom or the youth group. She begins to feed upon that. She will spend way too much money buying things that are popular; she will begin to dress immodestly. She will begin to obsess about how she looks and gradually she will continue down that slippery slope. She will learn how to flirt and eventually she will give away her virginity. That's how it works when you enter into sin.

Or another example: when we see no need to discipline ourselves for godliness and we become careless and negligent in our spiritual duties. When we say to ourselves, "You know, one sermon on Sunday is enough." And then little by little your religion becomes mechanical, it becomes nothing more than a ritual. You lose your passion, your zeal and you leave your love for Christ.

And one final one: when you see no need to watch and to pray, "Father, lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil." Beloved, don't flatter yourself. Don't flatter yourself. There are secret lusts hiding in the caverns of your imagination right now just waiting to rise up as a traitor within the camp and bring you to ruin. And that lust will never again be silent until it is either starved or satisfied.

Let me give you a common illustration, one that I see all too often. Let me take the illustration of a young man who comes along and he gets married. By the way, as I think

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about this, I remember when I was a young man and kind of went down this same path. You get married and you foolishly assume that you can provide for your family, you can shepherd your wife, you can raise godly children, you can keep yourself morally pure, you can reap a harvest of divine blessing upon yourself and your family without a disciplined private prayer life. Without a secret devotion to God. Without ever cracking your Bible between Sundays. Without any discipleship and accountability. Without honoring Christ with the spiritual gift that God has given you. Without any commitment to being obedient to the great commandment and the great commission. Yet filling your mind with a steady stream of Hollywood and music designed to appeal to the lusts of those who are dying in their sins.

My friend, if that is you, you are living in a fool's paradise and you have entered into temptation. What farmer would expect to reap a good harvest without first preparing the soil? And then planting the seed and removing the weeds and irrigating the crop? Paul said in Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." Dear Christian, if you sow the seeds of a sluggard, you will reap the harvest of spiritual disaster. How many men, good, godly men have we seen fall on their face in spiritual defeat? And yet, you don't think it can happen to you? Really? How sad when a man wants nothing to do with God in his heart and then God gives him over to the consequences of his iniquities and he becomes a slave to the idols that he loves. Beloved, so often we can be like those Sodomites who grope in the darkness to find the door of life. They weary themselves in vain pursuits that offer only momentary pleasure but end in eternal regret. Proverbs 4:19, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know over what they stumble."

Well, finally in closing, the only means to avoid entering into temptation is very important. Again, knowing the great danger of it: Jesus warns that we are to keep watching and praying. By the way, present imperatives in the original language which carry the idea of continuous action. It needs to be a part of who you are. "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." In other words, stay vigilant. The war is always raging all around you and even within you. Keep alert and stand guard over the frailties of your flesh. He was saying, don't be overconfident in your own strength. Be forever suspect of your own spiritual prowess lest you suffer some surprising defeat.

You know, Peter learned that the hard way and that's why he said in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert." As if to say, "Like I wasn't once." Because, "your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." But, you know, he also learned that the Lord can deliver us from temptation. In 2 Peter 2:9 he says, "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation."

And similarly, Jesus warned believers to be vigilant, to watch and to pray for his return, saying in Luke 21:34, ""Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and the day of the Lord come on you suddenly like a trap for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

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Online Sermons: http://otcr.org/content/sermon/748/Our_Savior-s_Pattern_for_Prayer_Part_3.html

Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer Part 3

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 6:9-13

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But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

We are to watch, we are to pray. Throughout Scripture we are frequently reminded of the importance of prayer. We are admonished, for example, in Hebrews 4:16, "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." By the way, if you look at the context there, that is referring to times of temptation. We see this reflected in the Psalmist's prayer when he said in Psalm 141:3, "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies."

We are told to put on the full armor of God. In Ephesians 6:18 he says, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints." It's interesting, the old cowboys back in the late 1800s and even early 1900s were very concerned about the night watch, when they had the night watch, they didn't want the cattle to get spooked and to stampede. They wanted to really care for the boss's herd so in order to stay awake, what they would do was rub a little bit of tobacco juice in their eyes. I wouldn't recommend that, but I heard that it really works. The great illustration of how we need to be. We are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust.

And in closing, I want to just remind you of some very practical things that I think will be of help. You see, every season of life brings with it unique temptations and we're all in some season of life. These seasons require us to watch and pray specifically. Maybe it's in times of disease or sickness or prosperity, poverty, uncertainty, confusion, whatever it may be. The Scripture gives us many illustrations of those who failed to watch and pray in some vulnerable season of their life and as a result, they slid down the slope over the cliff into tragic defeat.

For example: although Abraham was a man of great wealth and was promised an heir by God himself, during a season of waiting upon the Lord, Abraham grew impatient and he took matters into his own hands and succumbed to his wife's sinful scheme to have a child by Hagar. During a season of prolonged stress, Moses succumbed to anger and disobeyed the Lord's clear command and he smote the rock at Meribah. David succumbed to his lust and sinned with Bathsheba during a season of complacency and spiritual overconfidence. In a season of great spiritual victory, Elijah melted in fear and became suicidal over the threats of Jezebel. During a season of discipleship and service with the Lord, Peter became overconfident and boasted of his unwavering allegiance to Jesus and then denied him three times. It was in a season of ministry that Martha lost sight of the priority of submitting herself to the teaching of the Word of God and she succumbed to selfish pride and self-pity by demanding that Mary assist her with domestic duties.

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Beloved, we need to know ourselves, know the season in which we are living, anticipate those unique temptations that are so appealing to us. Our prayers should carry the force of Haggai warning to apostate Israel when he counseled them to “consider your ways.” Consider your ways.

I close with a little list of weaknesses that you might have, some categories and if these resonate within your heart, you need to watch and pray. Maybe you have a fascination with the kingdom of darkness and the world of the occult. Maybe you have a weakness in terms of an angry and defensive attitude that resents godly authority. Maybe you have a longing to be noticed and affirmed and in charge. Maybe you have a secret delight in character assassination. Maybe you have a tendency to give up in difficult circumstances. An inclination to fear man more than God. A weakness to buy things on impulse, credit, and overspend. A propensity to succumb to peer pressure. An attraction to worldly forms of immoral and ungodly entertainment. A predisposition to spiritual lethargy when things are going well. An attraction to pornography and other forms of immorality. A disregard for modesty, dignity and propriety. A pattern of envy, jealousy, materialism and discontentment. An apathetic disregard for private worship. A resentment of authority. A critical spirit that always sees the worst in others. An attitude of provincialism that just doesn't like people who are different than you and don't share your preferences. Or a heart attitude that sees worshipping and serving Christ in his church as merely a duty and not a desire, that is an overflow of the doxology of your heart.

Beloved, consider your ways. Let the light of Scripture shine upon you so that you see yourself for who you are. And learn what it means to examine your heart and to cry out to the Lord, “Father, lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Let's pray together.

Lord, all of us feel the sting of the lash upon our back because we all have sinned in these ways. I pray that these truths will begin to bear much fruit in our heart. Cause us to live them out. To the praise of your glory, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.

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