

Learn to Pray, Part 7

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 11, where we are sadly going to finish up the Disciples' Prayer this morning. But, we aren't going to be finishing up on prayer [as a whole] because [Jesus] keeps talking about it down through [Luke 11:]13. So, you can do the math. We're going to go a little bit faster in the latter section, but we're still going to be talking about prayer.

Before moving to California, I used to go through this bow hunting ritual in the fall for elk and deer. I'd go out into the woods and see if I could get an animal to get some "free" meat, which ended up costing about \$100 a pound when you figure out all the cost, but that's what you tell the wives. It's a challenge. [With] rifle hunting, you just need to *see* an animal. You can shoot an animal with a rifle at 400 yards and [it doesn't] even know where you are. But, when you're bow hunting, you have to be within about thirty-five yards or closer—otherwise you just can't kill [an animal]. The challenge is that deer and elk can see better, hear better, smell better, and run faster [than a man can], *and* they live in the forest [so they know the terrain better than you do]. They also have a very strong desire not to die. So, usually only about one out of [every] ten bow hunters comes back with anything because the odds are greatly on the side of the animal.

The hunters who do get animal[s] really only get them in two different ways: you either ambush them, or you deceive them. That's what works

best. Ambushing would be hiding in a tree stand, and when [deer or elk] come [along] below [the tree], they aren't looking up, and you shoot them with your arrow. Or, you [can] get several hunters and drive [the animals] to a certain location where one or two hunters [are] hiding to ambush them there. [However,] most of the people who have success [do so] because of deception. That works the best. You use different scents to lure them in, [or] you use decoys to lure them in, [or] you bugle a bull elk, he thinks you're another bull elk, and he comes in to fight and finds an arrow [instead]. That's pretty much the only way [to get it to work]. Even though the odds are greatly against the hunter, the hunter learns to exploit the weakness of the animal.

In the exact same way, Satan tempts Christians. Satan knows that a Christian cannot lose [his] salvation. Satan knows that the Holy Spirit, [who] is in believers, is greater than he is. Satan knows that God will not allow a believer to be tempted beyond what [he] is able [see 1 Corinthians 10:13]. And, Satan knows that believers have been freed from the power of sin [see Romans 6:22]. He knows that God has promised that he will not allow Satan to even touch believers. He knows that the odds are greatly against him. However, he has great success, and fills his tag regularly through the lives of believers, and it's never God's fault. It's just that Satan studies us, learns our weaknesses, and then exploits our weaknesses when we fail to do what we need to do to escape from temptation.

It is for this reason that we need help from God to avoid temptation. We need God to help us so that we don't fall into those sins [and because of which we] don't bring Him glory. So far, as we have gone through [Luke 11:1–4], we have learned that Jesus is the great example of prayer; that, as disciples, we should want to know how to pray; that we need to pray toward the end[s] of giving God glory, for the kingdom of Christ to come, that God would supply our daily needs, that He would forgive us our sins, and that He would keep us from entering into, or "lead us not" into temptation. That is the request that we want to look at this morning from Luke 11:4. Follow along [as I] read the whole prayer in verses 2–4, and then we'll focus on

four things we can learn from this last prayer request that Jesus tells us to pray.

And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’”

That’s it. [It’s] pretty short [and] sweet. You think, “All right. ‘Lead us not into temptation.’ [There’s] not even a ‘deliver us from evil’ there, like Matthew has. Just, ‘lead us not into temptation.’ Period.” So, what do we find here? There are four truths in this last prayer request that I would like to bring out and explain a little bit. I think it should be helpful for you to keep you from falling into sin and not giving glory to God.

The first [truth] is: You need God’s grace to live for His glory. This is pretty much a no-brainer, and we’ve talked about this multiple times, but it’s here and so we need to just be reminded of it. We’ve learned that the purpose of all things is the glory of God—[whether] we eat, whatever we do, drink, whatever, all to the glory of God [see 1 Corinthians 10:31]. So, our whole life is to try and achieve that end. In order to give God glory, we must realize that we need God. We need God’s gracious provision, and that’s why Jesus says, “Pray, ‘give us this day our daily bread’ [Luke 11:3]. Pray ‘forgive us our trespasses’ [see Luke 11:4]. Pray ‘lead us not into temptation’ [Luke 11:4].” All of those are requests that we, who are needy, ask God, who is gracious, to give us.

That is pretty easy. We see that there. Now, what is amazing is that there are many times when we don’t acknowledge that we need God. We just kind of do things on our own. We go through life trusting in ourselves, in other people, [in] worldly resources, and yet, all this time, God is actually the one who is supplying all of our needs [see Philippians 4:19]. We just aren’t acknowledging Him. We aren’t trusting in Him.

See if you can follow this progression of thought as we move through this prayer. We are to first pray—we've [already] learned this—that God is to be glorified in all things; His name is to be “hallowed” [see Luke 11:2], which means “reverenced, honored, respected,” and that happens when He receives glory in all of His creation and in our lives. We give Him glory in our lives only when we're obeying God's Word. I think we all know that. You can't give God glory when you're disobeying. “If you love Me, you will keep my commandments,” Jesus says [see John 14:15]. We are to pray that the kingdom of God would come [see Luke 11:2]. And, when the kingdom of God does come, then God's will [shall] be done “on earth as it is in heaven” [Matthew 6:10], through the reign of Christ because we, as believers, at that time will be glorified. We are praying for that time of even closer perfection when we will love God, honor God, and obey God. We are [also] to pray, “give us this day our daily bread” [Matthew 6:11], [asking God to] fulfill our needs. Why? [It is] because we need the basics of life so [that] we can obey God and love Him from the heart.

We are to say, “Forgive us our trespasses while we know in our heart[s] we're forgiving other people” [see Matthew 6:12; Luke 11:4] because we know we're going to fail. It is God's will that we obey Him by asking Him for forgiveness when we fail. Since obedience, loving God, and obeying Him out of love from the heart is the overarching category of what we need to be doing, then we need to avoid *not* doing that, which is sinning. Hence, the prayer request before us [in Luke 11:4, which is]: “Lead us not into temptation.”

Jesus said, in John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” You can do lots of things on your own, except glorify God, love God, [or] obey God. [If] you get off on your own—you quit trusting God—you're just like a branch that has been severed from the vine. It's fall [now], so all of my grapevines are starting to drop their leaves, and soon I'll get out there [to trim them] and [will] turn that huge mass of tangled vines into just a couple [of] little sticks. When you cut a branch off the vine, it

gets hard, dries up, and dies. There are no living, thriving branches that are apart from the vine. [However], even if you go to the vine in the middle of the winter, [when it] just looks like a brown stick, and you scratch just right below the surface of the bark, it's nice and bright green and very alive under there. Then in the spring, that [vine] buds out again. [If] you separate yourself from the vine, you die.

That's what a lot of Christians do in their lives. We call ourselves Christians, but by our actions we separate ourselves from the vine. Oh, we look like a living branch, but if you scratched under the surface you'd just find deadness under there. [If] you start trusting in yourself, and doing things in your own strength and your own ingenuity, and not asking God, you're just going to wither and die. You're going to find yourself feeling very far from God, [and feeling] very miserable [and] very unspiritual, because you [will be]. You'll be like the person that Jeremiah talked about in Jeremiah 17:5–6: "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength." This man is going to live in a stony wasteland, "A land of salt without inhabitant", and he's not going to see when prosperity comes. He's just going to be dried up spiritually.

Have you ever found yourself like that? You keep having good intentions: "I'm going to read my Bible. I need to read my Bible. I need to go to church. I should probably spend my time a little more wisely. I probably should listen to this instead of that. I should probably watch this instead of that. I should probably do this instead of that," but you keep making bad choices, bad choices, bad choices. Pretty soon, what happens to your soul? You just start shriveling up. You've left the resources that God has given you to thrive, and now you're shriveling up on your own. Ask yourself, "[Am I] reading [my] Bible?" You say, "Well, no." Do you know why? [It is] because you don't want to hear from God, that's why. "[Am I] praying—not only just maybe a formal time of prayer, but are you praying throughout the day?" You say, "Well, no." It's because you don't want to talk to God. "[Am I] serving? Well, no, not right now." [It's] because you don't love

the people of God. That's it. Just tell yourself the truth. Scratch under the surface—is it dead or is it alive?

Someone said, “An atheist can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman.” Think about that. When we call ourselves Christians and yet we don't do what God says, we're just practical atheists, aren't we? We're basically saying, “I'm not going to have this Man rule over [me]. [I'm] not going to have Jesus rule [my life]. I don't mind escaping hell, but let's not talk about following Christ, taking up [my] cross, doing what Jesus wants [me] to do. I mean, that's a little fanatic[al].” No, that's just Christian. You [think], “Well, yeah, there's the God hater, the pagan, the atheist. Of course, [those people are] going to live that way,” but too often those who profess Christ live that way. That is odd.

Octavius Winslow, in his book *The Glory of Christ in Heaven*, warned:

Beware of that practical atheism which excludes God from His own world; which excludes Him from your individual history. He is not only present in His created universe, but He is as much in personal events of life, shaping, guiding, overruling each and all.

It just amazes me when [I] hear things like, “Get prayer out of the school”; “Take ‘In God We Trust’ off our money”; “Let's not let the [ten] commandments be in the courthouse.” Hello? Government [was] established by God; our government is founded upon the principles of Scripture—the Word of God; our court system is based off of [the book of] Deuteronomy and you want to take God [out of it]? The only reason we have a composite society, where you can have people in different faiths coexisting, all men being created equal, is because we have the Bible. People looked at the Bible, and said, “Let's write the Constitution based on the Bible.” [And] now we want to get God out of the system? Of course, when something bad happens, we want to crawl back, [crying out], “Oh, God bless America!” Well, we need to bless Him first. We need to obey Him first.

The true Christian is the one who doesn't live like an atheist all week in his heart and in his actions. Stephen Charnock, in volume one of his pretty monumental and brainiac work *Existence and Attributes of God*, has a really good essay. If you can plod through it, it's well worth the thought. It's called "On Practical Atheism." Charnock, at one point, says:

All sin is founded in a secret atheism. Atheism is the spirit of every sin; all the floods of impieties in the world break in at the gate of a secret atheism, and though several sins may disagree with one another, yet, like Herod and Pilate against Christ, they join hand in hand against the interest of God. Though lusts and pleasures be diverse, yet they are all united in disobedience to him.¹

That is good. There was a lot more [in there], but I can't read the whole thing. What's really happening is when we call ourselves Christians but we don't do what God says, we practice an atheism. We may actually be saved, and we may be Christians in deed, but when we don't do what Christians do, except profess, then we are living like atheists and are no different in that respect. The true Christian knows this. He knows his weakness; he knows his inability to battle sin; and he knows that the only way he's ever going to make it and live for the glory of God is if God helps him or her. So, Christians pray because they know they need God.

[The second truth is]: Know that God leads you. It isn't hard to see, if you look at [Luke 11:4]—"Lead us not into temptation"—that we're asking God to lead us. God is sovereign. God is leading all of His creation to his intended purposes. He has declared the end from the beginning, Isaiah says [see Isaiah 46:10]. He is in the heavens, the psalmist says, and does whatever he pleases [see Psalm 115:3]. Paul says in Ephesians 1:11 that God "works all things after the counsel of His will." God is sovereign. God is leading; He is guiding even us and all events of history.

¹Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Baker Publishing Group, 1996), p. 48.

But how many times have you and I said something like this—I’ve really been sensitive to this because I knew this was coming, so I’ve been hearing it more probably because I’ve been studying it—where somebody says, “Yeah, tomorrow I’m going to go...” and you just fill in the blank there. Listen to what James says about that in James 4:13–16: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there’ and go to Disneyland. He doesn’t say that, but you get the picture.

“... and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” But as it is [(now listen to this)], you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.

Could you imagine us up here, [saying], “The elders have an announcement. Yes, um, one of our members said he was going to do something tomorrow and didn’t add on there, ‘If it be the Lord’s will,’ and we’re going to have to publicly discipline him.” You’re thinking, “Well, that’s kind of extreme.” “All such boasting is evil”—it is evil not to acknowledge that there is a sovereign God who is in control of all things. It is arrogance to think that you are in charge of your own future. That’s what the Scriptures teach. The fact is, you don’t even know if you’re going to be alive tomorrow. You don’t even know if you’re going to make it home today. I mean, we live in Burbank—there are some bad drivers here. Just be glad you’re not in Idaho—there are some *really* bad drivers there. When I was in Russia, we were driving down the road, and all of a sudden we pulled up on the curb and were driving down the sidewalk. I’m sitting in the back, [asking], “Is this normal?”

“Well, there are about five lanes of traffic and two lanes in the road, so we kind of just go wherever there’s space.” So, pray for me. I’m going to be going there in a month. Greg Grande is going with me, so pray for us.

At any moment, God could just cut the strings of your life, and then you [would] just drop into eternity. You never know when it's going to happen. To think that you're going to live another day, another hour, is presumption, it is arrogance, it is to deny God's sovereign will. There are those who deny God's sovereignty over them, who presume upon God, thinking, "Well, I am going to live this long, and if I do this, God will do that." We have a way of just thinking, "Well, you know, God isn't *that* sovereign." It's like the guy I read about last year, [a] Ukrainian man who brought a rope into the zoo at Kiev and lowered himself into a lion's cage, and said, "God will save me if He exists." A lioness jumped on him, cut through his carotid artery, and killed him instantly. Oh, well, that was really smart. He should have read his Bible, [where it says] not to put the Lord thy God to the test [see Deuteronomy 6:16].

You hear of things like this, and you [think], "Man, how ridiculous. How absurd! How foolish!" It's no more foolish than saying, "I'm going to Disneyland tomorrow," because you don't know that. You're presuming upon God. Psalm 37:23 says: "The steps of a man are established by the Lord, And He delights in his way"—they're established by the Lord. Proverbs 16:9 says: "The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps." Yeah, you think you know where you're going, but we all know what happens.

The other day I went to get Lisa at the airport. I'm thinking, "Oh, man, it's Sunday afternoon, there's not very much traffic, I'm going to whip over there to the airport. I'll leave extra early. I've got some good sermons to listen to." So, I go there, and right at that place where the freeway narrows and goes up the hill off the 110, there was a car conked out at the bottom of the hill, another car conked out halfway up the hill, [and] another conked out at the top of the hill. [I was thinking], "Oh! Oh!" After sitting there [for a while], you go through the same kind of multiple phases of traffic-jam torment. "What's going on? Man, I wish I could lay on my horn like that ungodly guy next to me." You're praying, "OK, Lord. All right. All right. I'll be patient. I'll be patient." And then pretty soon, [your prayer has

changed to]: “All right, God. I’m going to be late. OK. You’re sovereign. All right. This is Your will for me,” and all of a sudden the traffic starts going again. OK, you learned.

That’s how it is, isn’t it? We *think* we know what we’re doing. We think we have plans, but when God interrupts, He sometimes reminds us who’s in charge. Oh, yeah. You want to get there on time, but what does God want for you? Proverbs 20:24 says: “Man’s steps are ordained by the Lord, How then can man understand his way?” God ordains our steps. It just says it there. Jeremiah 10:23 [says]: “I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.” God is sovereign in guiding your life, so let’s not live like atheists and think we’re in charge, think we’re going here, think we’re going there, think we’re going to do this, think we’re going to do that, but [instead] say, “If the Lord wills,” knowing that He is the one guiding all history. Many people had intentions to go somewhere and be someplace and took a detour to the hospital or the mortuary and never showed up [at their intended destination].

[The] third [truth is]: Know that God may choose to use evil for your good. The prayer request [we’re exploring] is “lead us not into temptation” [Luke 11:4], but the fact is [that] God uses temptation for our good. Now, granted, God could, at the moment of salvation, deliver you from all temptation—it’s called “death and glorification”—He could just instantly Rapture you into heaven and that would be the end of it. Then you wouldn’t have to worry anymore because you would be in glory. But, some may think, “Well, are you trying to say that God leads us into temptation?”

First of all, you need to know that this word “temptation” can be translated in two different ways. It can be “testing” or “tempting.” The question is: Well, how do you know which it is? The only difference between a test and a temptation is [that] a temptation is when the motive is to lead someone to do evil. A test is when [the] motive is to give somebody an opportunity to do good. Satan only *tempts* because he only wants us to do evil. God only *tests* because He wants to give us an opportunity to exercise our faith and trust in Him. So, God will test us to give us an opportunity to do good—to

trust Him, obey Him, to become stronger in the faith. Satan will tempt us in an attempt to tear us down so we become entrenched in sin, entangled, and weaker in the faith. Though the same thing may happen, God may have one purpose and Satan may have another, and yet they achieve God's end.

Norval Geldenhuys says, "God himself does not tempt (James 1:13), but nevertheless He allows the faithful to be tempted in order to test and to purify us."² He goes on to say a little bit later:

We must pray that we be led as seldom as possible into circumstances fraught with temptation. But when God nevertheless allows us to be led into such circumstances, we must rejoice in the Lord who gives us the victory and causes everything to contribute towards the good of those that love Him (Rom. 8:28).³

That's exactly how it is. You know what James says in James 1:13–14: "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." God never solicits you to disobey Him—ever. [James continues], "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." It's you, it's always you, who sins. It's never God. God neither causes you to sin nor does He entice you or tempt you to sin. He *can't do it*. It's contrary to His nature.

[In Luke 11:4], Jesus isn't saying that we should ask the Father that we never be tempted again, because the Scriptures clearly teach that God uses temptation for good purposes. God knows when you're going to be tempted. He sees it coming and He could remove you. He could have removed either the serpent from the Garden or Eve from the serpent so that she wouldn't have to sin, but for His good purposes, He allowed it to happen. Think about this. Can you think of a case where [Scripture] explicitly says that God led somebody into temptation? Maybe Matthew 4[:1] or Luke 4[:1], where it

²Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 321.

³Ibid., n.p.

says: “And the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”? God did that. You’re thinking, “Well, man. Why would He do that?” Because, as Hebrews 4:15 says, Jesus needed to learn how to be that sympathetic high priest, being tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin.

So, God said [to Jesus], “OK, so [that] You can be the best priest possible, we’re going to stick You into the desert, isolate You from people, make You weak with fasting, and then I’m just going to let Satan come down on You with all of his might so that You can resist it so that You can be the sympathetic high priest.” [That is] a good thing. It’s just so great [that] when you go to Jesus, and you [say], “Oh, Lord, You don’t know how I’m tempted,” [you know that really], yes, He does [know]. You can’t say, “Well, You just don’t know how it...” Yes, He does. Have you ever fasted for forty days and been tempted without God’s restraint to just let Satan go after you? You’ve never experienced that degree of temptation. He knows. Whatever your temptation is, Jesus can sympathize with you because He has been there, but to a greater degree.

[Do] you remember what happened to Job? Here’s Job, described as the upright man, “fearing God and turning away from evil” [Job 1:1]. In Job 1–2 when the sons of God came to give an account to the Lord—[to] present themselves before the Lord—Satan is among them. The Lord says to Satan, “Hey, have you considered my servant Job?” [see Job 1:8]. [God] just says, “Go for it.” You’re thinking, “Well, you mean, God pointed Job out to Satan?” Yeah. Why would He do that? Well, how many people have ever been blessed from reading the story of Job? I have. I am really grateful for that book. Aren’t you glad he went through that? And not only that, Job was blessed from going through that, if you read the end of the story. [He was blessed] more than he was before. God blessed him abundantly. And so, yes, he went through the trial, but yes, it was for a good purpose.

Turn over to 2 Corinthians 12. In this book, Paul is defending his apostolic authority, and he has people who are trying to undermine it. At the beginning of [2 Corinthians] 12, he talks about these visions, revelations,

and things that God has given him, which are just incredible. We know from Galatians [that] God led [Paul] out and gave him a private school, transported him up into heaven, and gave him all of this incredible revelation, which Paul says is unutterable. [He says], “I just can’t even *tell* you how incredible it was!” Even though God gave him that huge blessing, God also knew Paul, and He thought, “You know, this is going to be a huge temptation for Paul. It would be a huge temptation for anybody, but even [for] Paul. So, I’m going to help him.”

Look at what [Paul] says in [2 Corinthians 12:]7: “Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,” which God gave to him, “for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself” now, notice the temptation for Paul was to be prideful, to exalt himself, because God gave him these incredible revelations. [The verse continues]: “To keep me from exalting myself,” so there’s a good purpose here, “there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me.” Now, a lot of times people talk about this “thorn in the flesh” as some sort of physical ailment. [Do you] see [the words] “messenger of Satan” there? The word “messenger” is the word *angelas*, [which is] almost always translated “angel.” A few times, it’s translated “one who brings a message,” but whenever you have an *angelas* of Satan, you’re talking about a demon. For sure it’s a person. It’s either a person [who] Satan was using, or it was a demon itself. Either way, it was a demon attack on Paul, [it was] a messenger of Satan.

Notice [that Paul says], “There was given *to me*” [emphasis added]. You could put in the white spaces there “by the loving God,” “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan,” an *angelas* of Satan, “to torment me.” *Why* would God do that? Well, look at what [Paul] says: “to keep me from exalting myself.” [That’s a] good purpose. God’s up there, and He says, “You know, I’m going to give Paul some pretty incredible revelations, but he’s really going to be tempted to be prideful, so I better keep that from happening, and what’s going to work for Paul is this situation. This is going to be the hard but good situation for Paul. This is what Paul needs.” Of course, Paul doesn’t know this. Paul doesn’t know what’s going on in the

mind of God at this point, and so, what does he do? Well, he does what all of us should do when all of these trials and problems come upon us. Look at [2 Corinthians 12:]8: “Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.” [It was probably something like], “Lord! Please make it go away. Lead me not into temptation. Deliver me from evil.”

Verse 9 [says]: “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’” Now, get that: “Paul, I’m not taking away the messenger of Satan. I’m not taking him away. I’m going to leave you there and let him continue to go after you. But I want you to know that while he is, and while you’re weak, My grace is going to be sufficient for you in that situation. So, not only am I going to give you the messenger of Satan to keep you from exalting yourself, but when you’re really weak, I’m going to supply just enough grace to get you through. That way, you don’t exalt yourself because you’re being pounded by the messenger of Satan, and you don’t exalt yourself because I’m making you really weak so you have to trust Me.” Do you see that? That’s not how I would do it. I would just say, “Messenger, [go to the] abyss. There you go, Paul, you’re fixed.” But then Paul would be tempted to be proud. This is what Paul needed. And who knows what you need? I’ll tell you what you need: whatever you’re getting right now.

Paul then goes on to say: “Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content” [2 Corinthians 12:9–10]. Notice the kinds of things he says here: “with weaknesses”—do you ever feel weak trying to do what God wants you to do? “With persecutions”—[do you] ever get persecuted? “With insults[, with distresses]”—[do you] ever get insulted or distressed? He says [he deals “with] “difficulties.” These little words he throws in there are all things that all Christians experience all the time when they’re trying to do God’s will. Paul says, “All these things are from the hand of a loving God. He brings them into our [lives] to cause us to trust Him because when we’re clinging to Jesus, *that’s* when God gets the most glory.”

Every Christian knows about these things to one degree or another. You're trying to please God, and then comes weakness, insults, stress, persecutions, and difficulties. It's just a temptation, isn't it, to run to self, to run away, to do anything but trust in God? James reminds us [of this] in James 1:2–3. [When you read these verses], you wonder if this is some sort of ancient, Near-Eastern typo. He says: "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials." Th[e] word[s] [translated] "various trials" [can mean] "multi-colored," "multi-faceted," "manifold," or all of the above. [The words] basically [mean] trials of every shape, size, and color. [You may wonder], "Are you sure? Maybe there's some Greek word that *sounds* like joy, that's almost like joy. [Maybe] the copy is just kind of messed up there. [Maybe] it really says, 'Consider it all *pain*,' or something. I mean, isn't there some sort of reason? Are you sure?" No, he says: "Consider it *all joy*, my brethren, when you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith" notice when it comes from God's hand it's a testing of your faith, and that "produces endurance" [emphasis added]. That is a good thing.

One Puritan preacher said, "Temptation is not so much the penalty of manhood as it is the glory of manhood. It is that by which a man is made an athlete of God." You're praying in your little small group, "Oh, Lord, help me to be a man of God," or "help me to be a woman of God," or you're having a quiet time: "Lord, just help me to be godly, help me to be strong in the faith," and God says, "OK! [It's] time for calisthenics. Now, remember this, OK? I'm letting you go into this. This is coming your way."

You have to say, "OK, what does the Bible say?" And you know what? What's weird is when we go into it and we're starting to hurt, and we're really getting weak, and we're almost at the point of despair, [we finally realize], "Maybe this is God." Of course it is! He's answering your prayer, man. He's trying to make you buff, spiritually. [He's giving you] five sets of ten temptations—lift them with the power of Jesus.

Samuel Rutherford, the Puritan, said: "God allows temptations to come upon us for our good, to teach us to handle our sword." How are you going

to learn how to handle your sword unless you get into some sword fights? Ease and pleasure never makes a fit soldier. It's just the way it is. [It is] like [someone saying], "Man, I'm going to be an Olympic [athlete]."

[Someone else says], "[Then] what are you doing on the couch?"

"Well, I'm trusting Jesus." He's going to send a lion after you and make you run, run, run!

You might, at this point, be asking yourself, "Well, but isn't it kind of dangerous? I mean, I can see from these examples you've given that God does allow us to be tested, and He not only allows us to be tested, but He actually, in the course of allowing us to be tested, brings us very close to where we're going to be tempted to sin. Why would God do that? Why would He bring us to the edge of the cliff like that? It just doesn't seem good. It just doesn't seem right." Well, that's not all the Scriptures say. The Scriptures also say in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and" that "*God* is faithful," and that *God* "will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but" *God* "will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to" bear up, or "endure it" [emphasis added].

Know this: If God ever lets you wander into the valley of death [see Psalm 23:4], He's going to bring you out. If He ever allows you to be tempted, and even tempted greatly, He's going to provide a way of escape—every single time. Which means [that] whatever temptation, whatever trial, whatever testing God brings your way, you know His grace is going to be sufficient for you so you can endure it. There [are] times when things come upon people in our church that [make me] marvel at how well they're doing. When somebody's going through some sickness or some family trial, and you learn about it, and you think, "How are you even standing? Why aren't you in the fetal position in the corner?"

[The person responds], "I don't know." It's God's grace. Just the thought of them going through it is enough to almost overwhelm me, but to see them clothed in their right mind, kind of relaxed, and functioning, [makes me think], "Man, that is incredible!" and that's because I'm not in that trial, so

God's grace isn't sufficient for me for their trial. But if I [*were*] in that trial, His grace would be sufficient. It might not be easy [to deal with the trial], but [His grace] would be sufficient. It might make me weak and cling to Christ, but then I would be strong. Whatever God brings our way, whatever testing, whatever trial, we need to realize that God may use hard, testing, tempting things to make us spiritual athletes for Him.

[The fourth truth is]: God is [the] one [to whom] we need to come, asking that He not lead us into temptation, which is what the whole request [in Luke 11:4] is. I know what you're thinking: "Well, Jack, I thought you just said He doesn't." Well, sometimes He doesn't. You can still ask for one thing, even though God might allow another. The problem, though, if we fall into sin, is never with God. Knowing our own weakness, we need to say, "God, listen, please don't let me get into any situation [in which] I am going to sin against You. You know my weakness, and I know it's always my fault, but You also know that I don't always use Your grace like I should. You know I don't trust You like I should. You know my weakness, and so while Your grace is sufficient, I'm *not* sufficient. So please, 'lead me not into temptation.' Don't let me go there." I pray this way all the time—every time we go to the mall. I was just e-mailing Brad Kelly in Japan, and we commiserated about the mall. The mall—it's like Vanity Fair. Every time I go in there, it's just like, "Oh, boy." It's just [a] teeth-gritting place [for me].

God has promised to not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able. I know what you're thinking, "OK. God doesn't tempt us beyond what we're able. God is guiding us through His providence. God knows all things before they happen [see 1 John 3:20], but God allows things to happen. Why? Why does He do that? If He's a good God, and He knows everything, and He not only knows what's going to happen, but has the power to remove us from the temptation, and that He's not going to allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, then why would we ever pray, 'lead us not into temptation' when He has already said His grace is sufficient?" OK, we can get to that place, and though [this is] a logical sequence of thoughts, we

need to remember this: God, in His sovereignty, not only decrees the end, but the means to the end. He not only says, “I am going to save so-and-so,” but He also decrees *how* so-and-so will be saved. If God already knows who He’s going to save, then why pray for the lost? If God already knows who He’s going to save, then why witness to the lost?

Listen, if your days are already numbered, then why eat well? Amen? Why [take] vitamins and [do] exercise? Your days are already numbered anyway! That’s because not only has God decreed who will be saved, not only has He numbered your days, but He also decrees the means [by] which He achieves those ends. One of the ways [in which] God brings Himself glory is by giving you and I the great blessing of participating in what He’s doing here on earth. That is the cool thing about being a Christian: *you* get to be part of God’s eternal plan. God says, “I’m going to save this person,” and He sends you there to witness to [him]. Sure, God could have just zapped him saved, but He used you, He used your prayers, He used words out of your mouth. You shared the gospel with [that person], and though you didn’t save him—God did—God used you. God *wants* to use you.

God says, “This is what I want you to do. Though I am good, and My grace is sufficient, and I know what’s going to be too much for you, and I know I’m going to give you enough to endure under any temptation, I want you to pray to Me that I not lead you into those situations because that way you’ll be reminded that you need Me to escape from sin, that you need My grace. Then you’ll trust in Me, and then I’ll do My part, [and] you’ll do your part so that you can participate in what I’m doing in your life.” That’s what God wants. It’s not just, “God is sovereign,” but God is sovereign by doing things through you. It’s amazing that He doesn’t just throw us away in the trashcan, saying, “Listen, I can do a lot better without you.”

You [may be] sitting out there, [thinking], “Yeah, but how does that work? I mean, how does God answer the prayer, ‘lead us not into temptation’? If [I’m] going to praise God for answering that prayer, what does that look like?” Well, that’s a good question. First of all, you need to know [from] where sin comes. We usually sin from two different places: inside

and outside. If God just transported you to some tropical island, cast Satan and demons into the abyss, and you're there all by yourself in this perfect little paradise, it wouldn't take ten minutes before you started complaining about how far up the coconuts are in the tree. [Or about] how you're getting sunburned, and, "Lord, how come you had to bring me here with no suntan lotion? I wish I could have some friends. Where's my cot [so I can] lie on the beach?" We would have plenty of sins, complaints, and problems all by ourselves—even if there [were] no evil influence. We can sin plenty on our own. So, sometimes temptation comes from within. The other time[s], it comes from without. So, first you need to understand that.

Then we need to also realize that God leads us in two primary ways. So, we have two primary ways [from which] we're going to expect sin [and] temptation to come, and we have two primary ways [in which] God leads us. One is through His providence. We've already talked about it: God is leading all things by His providence. Geldenhuys says this that the Christian "longs to be able to sin no more. So he prays, conscious of his own weakness, that God may guide his life away from circumstances in which he is exposed to evil temptations."⁴ That's exactly right: you pray that God will just guide you.

You know what's interesting? We never know when we don't go into sin, right? [That's] because [we] weren't there. It never happened. I don't know if this is going to be this way in heaven, but it's going to be interesting if we could sit down with Jesus, and say, "Could you show me what would have happened if *this* [hadn't] happen[ed]? If *this* [hadn't] happen[ed], what would have happened? What about *this*?" God not only knows everything [that happens], [but] He [also] knows everything that *could have* been.

The fact is [that] there are a lot of times in our lives—I'm sure you've experienced [this]—when all of a sudden, you realize, "Man, I could have been there when this happened." Have you ever had that happen? People say, "Yeah, I was just in the World Trade Center the day before the [9/11

⁴Geldenhuys, 321.

attack]. I was going to be there that [day], but some things happened and I just wasn't able to get there." Or, you're driving down the freeway, there's an earthquake, and the bridge falls down behind you. "Yay! Thank You for speeding me up." [You realize that happened because] for some reason, your wife and kids were on time that morning. It's like, "We're early? Well, that's good, [I] might have a leisurely drive," and off you go and an earthquake [knocks] down the bridge. You look in your rearview mirror, [and think], "Oh, thank You, Lord!" when every other morning, you would have [driven] off the end [of the collapsed bridge]. We don't know those things, but we know that God is delivering us from temptation through providence, through His workings, and we don't ever know what those are, [but] we [should] just be thankful, that [we] weren't in that place [where we] would have been severely tempted and [would have] caved in.

The second primary way [in which] God will answer [our] prayer to lead us from temptation is just by wisdom gained from His Word. I could preach to the end of the year on this one. I'm just going to give you four examples [of how] God might lead you through wisdom gained from His Word. First: God's Word tells us in Proverbs 27:12: "A prudent man sees evil and hides himself, The naive proceed and pay the penalty." You meditate on that a little bit, and you think, "I think what that's saying is [that] I need to look ahead, see where evil is going to be encountering me, and take a detour." That's pretty simple, isn't it? There was this place where [a road construction crew] put this new asphalt down, and there was a three-inch manhole dip. (Yeah, you're all laughing because you hit it, too.) What happens is [that] the next day, you're driving down, and you aren't thinking about it, and all of a sudden, wham! You think, "I did it again!" Finally, after four or five times, you're thinking to yourself, "OK! When I turn down that street, I remember that manhole [dip] is there, and I'm not going to drive in it today!" and you detour, and it's smooth and wonderful.

That's what [the psalmist is] saying. You know you're going to get on the Internet, you know what's there, you know the dangers, so you put up little guards, little filters, make certain settings, and get certain accountabil-

ities. Why? [It is] so you don't fall into the pothole. You know that when you're going to get around Aunt so-and-so that she just has a way of driving you crazy. So, what you're going to do is you're going to pray up, you're going to get some Scriptures memorized, you're going to do your best, and [you're going to] get somebody to hold you accountable—[maybe get] your wife to [take] a needle and stick it in your hand if you start getting a little wound up. [You do] whatever it takes because you know what's going to come. You know this is a tempting situation, [so] you hide yourself from it. That's just an example. You study God's Word, [and] it tells you: "[If you] see evil, hide yourself from it. Don't be naïve and proceed and pay the penalty."

Terry Johnson, in his book *When Grace Comes Alive*, says [that there] are three "P's" of temptation: people, places, and products. Isn't that good? Or, if you want to be more biblical, you can [consider] what Thomas Watson calls the "godless man's trinity: 'The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life'" [see 1 John 2:16]. That's where it's coming [from]. So, if you keep finding things that happen in your life, and you keep falling into sin, then make plans to avoid the pothole instead of just proceeding and paying the penalty. Bingo!

Here's [the second example of how God leads you to wisdom through His Word]. Psalm 119:9–11 says: "How can a young man keep his way pure?" That is a good question, especially today. "By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You." You think about that, meditate on that, and finally, you get this revelation from that little verse, [and you think], "I should probably stick more of God's Word in my heart. If I do that, it will help me not sin against God!" That is not a hard concept. So, you say, "OK, I don't think [that on] Sunday morning Pastor Jack is going to be able to fill up my walnut to last me the rest of the week, so I've got to do more. So, I'm going to listen to more sermons on CD. I'm going to load up my MP3 player, [and] instead of listening to [secular] music I'm going to listen

to God-honoring music, music with Scriptures in it. I'm going to read less fiction [and] more books that put into my heart biblical truth. I'm going to watch things that don't undermine the Word of God."

You [can] basically look at your life like a [bucket]. Every time you sin or go into something that's just worthless and [dissipating], it's like somebody pokes a hole in your bucket. You say, "I'm going to stop those [holes] up." Not only that, you're trying to keep the water inside pure. If you don't guard what's coming into your life, and plug those holes, then the sewage comes in. So, you say, "OK, in order to not sin against God, I [have] to get God's Word on my heart, and I [have] to keep it pure. So what am I going to do?" Stop the leaks [and] stop the sewage from coming in. That's not all that complex. That's how God "leads you not into temptation": He gives you the wisdom to not go there.

Here's [a third example]. Let's say you're reading 1 Corinthians 6:18, [where] Paul says: "Flee immorality." You think, "Well, that is interesting." You're reading along, and you get down to 1 Corinthians 10:14, and [Paul] says: "Flee from idolatry." You're thinking, "That's the second time he's said that. I'm going to look up some cross-references." Then you look at 1 Timothy 6:11, [which says]: "Flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness." Then you look at 2 Timothy 2:22, [which says]: "Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." You're thinking, "I think there's a theme here. I should probably be fleeing!" Then you make plans to flee from whatever it is that's chasing you down.

Now, that's not difficult. A [fourth] way [in which] God might answer your prayer [through His Word] is by bringing other believers into your life. You [could] get involved in a small group [or] a discipleship group, [and] just say, "Hey, will you meet with me? Will you help hold me accountable?"

I just recently heard a good story. There was a guy who was going to meet with a small group at seven o'clock. He had to work late, so he called up, and said, "Sorry, I can't come."

[The group] said, “We’ll postpone it until eight.” [Those are] good friends.

He called up at eight, and said, “Oh, I’m so sorry, I’m going to work later.”

“OK,” [they replied], “we’re going to postpone it until nine.”

Nine o’clock [came, and he called, and said]: “Listen, guys, I am so burned out.”

“You’re coming.”

“Oh, man, you know, I just can’t. I’m just way too tired.”

“You’re coming, and if you don’t come, we’re showing up [at] your house.” Those are friends. [Those are the type of people who say], “Listen, [when] you get into our small group, man, you’re dying here. We’re after you, pal.” That’s it.

[Imagine that] you [are having] your little Bible study, and somebody shows up, and says, “Oh, I didn’t get my study done.”

[You say], “Oh, OK. We’re just going to spend about fifteen minutes, and we’re going to take turns praying for you and your problem. Then we’re all going to text you ten times a day for the next week to remind you [to do it], because we love you.” You go after each other so God may “lead you not into temptation” by giving you people in your life who are going to encourage you to do what is right.

These are just four examples of all sorts of ways God’s Word [shows us that] God will “lead us not into temptation.” When you say, “Lord, lead me not into temptation,” it’s not like God’s just going to providentially prevent it from happening all the time. Sometimes He says, “OK, here’s wisdom, you apply it by My grace, and you escape.” That’s how most of it happens.

We [have] to close shop here. I came across this [poem] by a man named Augustus Toplady. Most of us know him for his hymn “Rock of Ages,” [but he also] wrote a lot of other poems. He lived from 1740 to 1778. I’m just going to finish with this little poem that he wrote. It’s called “The Lord’s Prayer,” and as I read this, I want this to be a review to you of everything we’ve learned so far in the Lord’s Prayer, because he covers everything—

not only what's in Luke, but what's in Matthew [as well]. Just listen to his words, let these truths be fixed in your mind [and] sink in your heart, so that as you leave today you will be resolved to give God glory in your prayer life. This is what Toplady wrote:

Our holy Father, all Thy will
We fain would perfectly fulfill;
But each has left Thy law undone,
Unworthy to be called Thy son.

Who art in heaven, enthroned on high,
Diffusing glory through the sky;
Reigning above, on earth revered,
By saints beloved, by sinners feared.

Forever hallowed be Thy name,
The Triune God, the bright I Am;
At which seraphic choirs and all
The hosts of heav'n adoring fall.

Thy kingdom come; e'en now we wait
Thy glory to participate.
Rule in our hearts, unrivaled reign,
Nor e'er withdraw Thyself again.

Thy will, Thy law, Thy precept giv'n,
Be done on earth, as 'tis in heav'n;
Faithful as angels, fain would we
With covered faces wait on Thee.

Great God, on whom the ravens cry
For sustenance, our wants supply;
Give us this day, and evermore,
Our daily bread from hour to hour.

Forgive whatever we do amiss,

Our willful sins and trespasses,
As we forgive—reward us thus—
All them that trespass against us.

And lead us not by bounty's tide,
Into temptation, lust or pride;
But what by mercy we obtain,
Let power omnipotent restrain.

And, oh, deliver us Thine own
From evil and the evil one,
Who fain his darts in us would sheath,
And bind us with the chains of death.

Thou, Lord, canst vanquish his design,
Thine is the kingdom, only Thine;
The power, the eternal majesty,
And glory, appertain to Thee!

That is a great poem. It just brings everything that we've learned all together. So, let's now bow [our heads], and I just pray that as we go through this [series on prayer], this won't just be information *about* praying, but this will be information that will be *turned into* praying. Let's pray.

Father, we do want to thank You that Jesus is the great example [see Luke 11:1], that as disciples we do desire to want to know how to pray [see Luke 11:1]. We pray that You would glorify Your name. We pray, Father, that in us and in all things in this earth You will glorify Your name [see Luke 11:2]. Father, we also want to ask You that You would just cause Jesus to return soon, that He would come for His Church and set in motion those things that will bring about Your kingdom here on earth [see Luke 11:2]. Father, may the thought of that purify us, and, Father, may we acknowledge every day that we need You for our daily needs—not only for the little things, but also for the big things [see Luke 11:3]. And, as we are trusting You, Father, forgive us. Forgive us when we fail to give You honor in our

lives. And, Father, may we only ask for forgiveness as we are actively forgiving others who sin against us [see Luke 11:4]. And, Father, may we also just come to You asking that You would lead us not into temptation [see Luke 11:4], for we are weak, and even though Your grace is sufficient, we all like sheep go astray, each of us turns to his own way [see Isaiah 53:6], but, Father, we are thankful that the Lord Jesus Christ caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him [see Isaiah 53:6]. Father, we are reminded that You are a great God, that You never allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but You always provide the way of escape [see 1 Corinthians 10:13]. Help us to trust You, help us to look for that way that we might escape, that we might give You glory and honor for helping us walk in holiness. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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