

Lead Us Not into Temptation, but Deliver Us from the Evil One

SCOTT HOEZEE

I once saw a bumper sticker on a car that said: Lead me not into temptation; I can find it myself. Although meant humorously, there is an undercurrent of truth here as well. We all know that temptation comes our way on a regular basis. A waiter puts a dessert tray under our noses when we are already pretty full from the meal we just had. We look at it and say: Hmm, it's very tempting. More seriously, though, we are tempted to cut corners on our taxes, to fritter away our time playing a computer game while getting paid to be on the job, to look at a man or a woman not our spouse in lustful ways, to tell lies to cover up something we don't want anybody to know about. Whether we find temptation ourselves, or temptation finds us, it's a daily reality. Today on *Groundwork*, we take up that petition from the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Stay tuned.

DARRELL DELANEY

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, this is now episode five in a six-part series here on *Groundwork* on the Lord's Prayer as Jesus taught it to the disciples in Matthew 6 and Luke 11; and so, we have already looked at the whole prayer up until this line about temptation, and although we still have a program on the traditional final line: For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever; the truth is that the petition in this program is actually where Jesus' model prayer ends.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, we have covered a lot of ground, Scott, in the last few episodes here, and we will get to this when we talk about the last line in the prayer, but this is the final part where Jesus ends it; and in Matthew, he continues to talk about forgiveness; and in Luke he goes into a different topic all together; and so, it is interesting how we come up with those different ways of continuing the prayer; but we also remember how Jesus is teaching us to focus on God, on our relationships that we have with each other, and now temptation.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; so, we are on the final petition, and it is kind of a two-parter, although they are linked, and we will see that. We are going to spend a good bit of this program on the lead us not into temptation part, but we will conclude with the deliver us from evil part. So, those are the two parts of the petition that we are looking at. Let's begin, Darrell, with something I think has probably occurred to a lot of us. I know it has occurred to me; probably it has occurred to you. If we have to ask God *not* to lead us into temptation, does that mean that otherwise God *would* lead us into temptation? Does God do that?

DARRELL DELANEY

Well, if we know God to be our shepherd, I could see how some people would run into that challenge. A shepherd is a leader and a person who is going to lead the sheep into the right direction; and the shepherd is supposed to have the best interest of the sheep at heart, and he cares for the sheep. So, it could lead to a

theological issue if you believe a good God is going to lead you into a place where you are going to be tempted; and that could lead to some theological problems, and it could lead to some faith problems in the practical.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And some of us know that in some places...every once in a while you are visiting a different church or a different tradition, some have changed this petition in the Lord's Prayer to save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil; and so, putting it that way gets God off the hook as the source of the temptation, or at least as the one who somehow leads us into it; but there is actually good biblical warrant to suggest that however we understand this petition in the Lord's Prayer, God is not the source of our temptation to sin in any sense, right? So, this is actively taught in the Bible. These words from James 1:12:

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. ¹³When tempted, no one should say, "God tempted me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

DARRELL DELANEY

You just brought out a very important point that it says here: God is not the tempter. The devil is named the tempter actually; and so, we must understand the difference between test or trial...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And temptation. God tests quite often, but he does not tempt, because that leads to sin.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In Matthew 4, right? The Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness, but then Matthew writes, Jesus is there to be tempted by the devil. The devil is the tempter. 1 Corinthians 10: ¹³No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

DARRELL DELANEY

You can be led by the Spirit into possibilities where the enemy could tempt you, but if you are led by the Spirit, you are also given an escape route by the Spirit...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly.

DARRELL DELANEY

Just because this passage reminds us of that; and actually, it lets us know that Jesus himself has been through this kind of temptation. We see it in Hebrews 4; because Jesus himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to keep those who are being tempted.

¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

So, he can connect to us...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

He can relate to us, in his humanity, the temptation challenge.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we just looked at several passages. If we take the sum total, what do we learn? Well, yes, indeed. First, God tempts no one. Two, Jesus endured temptations so he could sympathize with us when we get tempted the same way he did, but then he also knows how to help us. If we lean on Jesus, he knows what we need because he knows what he needed, right? The third thing we learned: God can actively curtail temptations, right? We can never say, Darrell, that we are helpless. Oh, the devil made me do it, we say. Well, the devil tempted you to do it, but you did it.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Our only choice is not to cave in. God and Jesus can and will give us a way out if only we will take it

DARRELL DELANEY

So, not only does God equip us and empower us to make the right decision...to choose not to sin...but he also gives us an escape route when we are under the pressure, or the fire, if you will, of the temptation. So, we can never absolve responsibility and say: Well, my arm was twisted. I was bullied into this, or the devil made me do it, so to speak. Flip Wilson can't get credit for that, but it is really important for us to know that we have the ability to follow Jesus' pattern and his example.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, why did Jesus put it the way he did in the prayer: Lead us not into temptation. If God never tempts us, why ask him not to lead us there? Well again, two ways to think of it: First, just as the Spirit led Jesus to the place of temptation in the wilderness, right after his baptism, so it could be that we could be led to a place of temptation. We are not helpless once we get there, but we don't even want to be led there, because Jesus was human and divine; we are only human, and so, we would just as soon be spared that. Save us from the time of trial; the people who put it that way now in the Lord's Prayer, they are on to something.

I think the other thing we want to talk about, Darrell, is not only that we don't want God to lead us into temptation, we want God to keep us from leading ourselves into a place of temptation, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, it's true. If we are too confident in our own self or our own flesh, we could fall to pride, because we know it comes before a fall; and if we are not careful, we could overestimate our faith or our courage or our willpower or whatnot. It could put us in a situation that might get us in trouble.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; I mean, if we have a drinking problem, don't willingly walk into a bar and think: Well, I won't drink anything. Or, if I do, it will just be one...just be one. If you have a gambling problem, don't walk into a casino and say: I'll just look around and get a hotdog. I won't gamble...I won't put money into a slot machine. Why put yourself in that situation? So, yes; we want to say to God: Don't bring us into places where we are likely to fall into fail; but Lord, at the same time in this petition, we are saying: Don't let us lead ourselves in there either. I mean, because, you know, we could lead to situations willingly where we are more likely than less likely to mess up.

DARRELL DELANEY

And so, when we think about this prayer, we need to understand that evil is all around us, and we are easily tempted, and we've got to be careful about that; but in a moment, we are going to talk about the *nature* of sin, and what temptation actually is; so stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and we are talking about the Lord's Prayer; specifically, the line that says: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Darrell, we want to spend a little time just drilling in a little bit more to just what temptation is in the Bible just generally.

DARRELL DELANEY

And as I said in the earlier segment, there is a difference between the testing that God does and God allows, and the temptation that is from James 1, according to what is going on inside of us and our sinful nature that leads us to this place; and we make poor decisions. So, it would be great to have an understanding of the word *tempt* and the word *temptation*. So, maybe we can talk about that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

If you go to a website like Bible Gateway...a great website...and just search the New International Version of the Bible, for instance, and you look for every occurrence of *tempt* and *temptation*, it only occurs twenty-one times in the Bible. *Tempt* or *temptation* only twenty-one times, *all* of them in the New Testament, which is interesting. There is no Hebrew word translated as *tempt* or *temptation*, at least, in the NIV of the Old Testament. That might surprise you because you think: That word must be in Genesis 3, right? It must be in the story of Adam and Eve's fall into sin. No; it is not there; however, Genesis 3 is a master course on how temptation works.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, let's read this passage in Genesis 3, where the temptation happens, even though also subtly. So, it says: Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"⁴ "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman.⁵ "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

There is a lot going on there, Scott.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; so, it is interesting to note...this is kind of a sideline before we drill into that a little bit more...the original temptation of humanity begins with the serpent...the devil...saying: Did God *really* say..." And then, the devil inserts a line that, of course, God had *never* said; and just as a sideline, that is curious because by the time we get to the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness much later in the Bible, like in Matthew 4, the serpent, or the devil in that case, doesn't say: Did God really say? Instead, the devil actually quotes the Bible and tempts Jesus to test out the truth of it. So, in Genesis 3, the devil misquotes God to get the deed done, and in Matthew 4, the devil quotes God accurately, but then misapplies the words of God. Darrell, I think this is just a good reminder that when it comes to temptation, the devil is an opportunist. He will do whatever it takes, and he won't necessarily use the same tactic twice. That is one of the reasons that this whole area of temptation is so dodgy and dangerous.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes; and the Bible calls him crafty and cunning for a reason, because he does whatever he can to trip us up, to confuse us, to get us to the place where we don't believe and take God at his word. I think it is very interesting that he would...Jesus is the Word of Life, and he would come to him with the Word that he inspired and try to get him to be confused about it. Really, really, really interesting that he would do that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; and in Genesis 3, to get back to the story, the serpent first says something that makes God sound ridiculously strict: Did God really say you cannot eat from *any* tree in the garden? Well, of course, God never said any such thing. I mean, you would think that is such an exaggeration that Eve would never fall for it; and at first, it looks like she didn't, but it works anyway, because the serpent made God overly strict; but when Eve corrects the serpent, she doesn't correct him quite correctly, because she says: God did say we can eat from any tree, except the one in the middle of the garden. God said not to eat from that one, and also, that we may not *touch* it, or we will die. God never said that second part.

DARRELL DELANEY

Got it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

God never said the part about not touching it. Eve added that. Why? Well, the serpent got under her skin with the notion that God wasn't being fair, and that planted a seed and it germinated, and the next thing you know, Eve starts to play the same game, and she makes God out to be a little more strict, too. It works!

DARRELL DELANEY

That could be its own section of teaching, Scott, because she got tempted from the devil in a very subtle way, but she over-corrects; and she tries to protect the boundary by adding this extra word that God never said; and when that happened, oh, it was checkmate for her, because she fell into the same problem that many of us fall into, that we think: Oh, God is not being fair. He is holding out the goodness on us and he is keeping us from all the good things; and that has never been God's heart; and that has never been his intention; and Eve fell for it.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And it is a good reminder that this is how it goes for all of us, right? I mean, the serpent didn't come to Eve and say: Eve, eat the fruit; eat it! Just do it! Eat it! Nope, nope; that is not how he got her there; and you know, think about the area of sexuality. The devil doesn't usually come and say: Hey, go ahead and have sex with that person who is not your spouse.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Oh, no, no. Instead, the move number one is: Well, you can think about it. It doesn't hurt to fantasize; and then a little later: Well, you can flirt now and then. That is harmless. And then: Go ahead and have some minor physical contact. And then later: Don't worry if you get into a situation where the two of you are alone, you can control yourself.

Walter Wangerin Jr. has a wonderful book on marriage: *As For Me and My House*, and he has a whole chapter titled: Avoiding Adultery; and in that chapter, he talks about the moment of maybe; and he goes on to claim that full-blown affairs always begin with a moment of maybe. Yes, you just think about it, and that is the subtle way...just as with the serpent with the fruit...that is the subtle way by which we start going down a path that we ought not go down.

DARRELL DELANEY

Those subtle things that you are talking about, Scott, and the enemy has been very good at this, he uses these very little things to kind of knock us off balance just a few degrees, and we know if a ship goes off a few degrees, miles down, we are way off course; and you also know the adage about the frog in the pot, of course.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

Darrell Delaney: If he gradually turns the heat up on it and he will stay in there and cook to death because he cannot tell that the heat is changing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is what happens with these temptations. They start very subtly, and we get to justifying them and making excuses for them, and we run into trouble if we are not careful.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, as we said when we opened today's program, Darrell, none of us is a stranger to temptations of all kinds. It is a daily reality, and it is more often subtle than overt; but, you know, the Bible assures us that God is here to help us. Jesus understands us. He has been there.

DARRELL DELANEY

He has been tempted in the desert, and he has been tempted at every point in his life, and understands what we go through; and the Spirit gives us the power to overcome it. Thanks to his resurrection, we have access to that. But as we close out this episode, we want to focus on the second half of this prayer, which is: Deliver us from evil. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we are looking at the last petition of the Lord's Prayer. We have been considering the lead us not into temptation part; and now, we go to deliver us from evil. As we begin this part, Darrell, it is good to notice that in the Greek language of the New Testament, there are two words that sometimes have been translated as *evil*. One word is *kakia*, and Jesus uses that in Matthew 6, not long after he teaches the Lord's Prayer. There is that line in the Sermon on the Mount that the old King James Version used to translate as *evil*, you know. Jesus says: Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will worry about itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. That is the old King James; but actually, the word there is *kakia*, which is a level of badness, but it is not full-blown evil. So, more modern translations say: Each day has enough trouble of its own. That is probably more accurate. But the word we get in the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6 is the word *poneros*. Now, that is a word that carries with it a number of related meanings, including a sense of bad that we just thought about with word, *kakia*; but this word is much heavier. It refers to things that are malign and malevolent...things that are wrong in the sense of being wicked. So, we can see why it has long been translated as *evil*. Curiously, though, there is some evidence that this can serve almost as a name for the devil, which is why sometimes you see translations of this part of the Lord's Prayer that say, not just: deliver us from evil; but deliver us from the evil one. In that sense, when we ask God to deliver us from evil or the evil one, we are asking to be rescued from the entire realm of darkness that opposes God's kingdom of light.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, in Ephesians 6, it talks about that kingdom of darkness in verses 12-18, and how the enemy's ranks are organized against the people of God in the spiritual battle, because our battle is not against flesh and blood; and that kingdom of darkness is the evil that we are asking God to deliver us from; *and*, there is an evil one;

namely Satan, who is in charge of all of that, and this is the prayer that we would be equipped to withstand these things that he tries to throw at us on a daily basis.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As often as not, the apostles in the New Testament are reminding us not to forget this. The good news of the gospel is what Paul says in Colossians 1: ¹³For (Jesus) he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Paul works the same side of the street in Ephesians 5:

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light... ¹⁰and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹⁴This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

So, we are being reminded when we ask God to deliver us from evil, he already has, right? He already has. Lean into that; live into that; and don't give in to the temptation to run back into the darkness. That is what Paul's main message to the Colossians was, the main message to the Ephesians, Corinthians...all of them! You used to be in the dark; now you are in the light. You used to *be* dark; now you just *are* light; live like it and don't lapse back into the darkness.

DARRELL DELANEY

Paul is not like telling them to inform them, but he is reminding them. So, the idea is to remember who you are...remember who you have been called to...remember your identity and your purpose...and Jesus said it in Matthew before, right, in the Sermon on the Mount section. He says: You are the light of the world; and therefore, you cannot be hidden; you cannot do things in the dark because your character is to shine the light that you have been given; and as people who are filled with the Spirit, we will make mistakes and we will ask God for forgiveness, but we will continue to strive to allow Christ to have more access to our lives, so that we can be the vessels to be used.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You quoted that line, and we have looked at the Sermon on the Mount on *Groundwork* here before, but...and we noted this at the time...but it is striking, right? Jesus doesn't say: Hey, work on *becoming* the light of the world. No; it is just an indicative statement: You *are* the light of the world. You *are* the salt of the earth. Paul has that line we just had in Ephesians 5: You *are* light in the Lord...you *are* light. So, live as children of the light. There is that interesting tension that we all have in our lives, right? I mean, on the one hand, Paul is able to be very forceful, saying: You are light; and yet, he has to follow up that indicative statement with a command: So, live like children of the light, right? Because we are in that already and the not yet. We are in between the times. We have been redeemed; we have been justified; we are *becoming* more sanctified; we are *becoming* more like Jesus, but we are not there yet; and so, yes; on the one hand, you are light; and on the other hand, please live like light...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we all know that in our own lives, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

We do; and so, we hear in the format of Paul's writings that he would show who God is and what God has done, and then turns the letter—the epistle—to, okay, now that you know all this, therefore, live this way. Live this way! You have the power to put to death the deeds of darkness; you have the power to put to death the things in your own flesh that tempt you, because the Holy Spirit has given you the ability to do that when you set your mind on things above, and when you allow him to dwell in your heart. Those things won't come easy; they will be a process; but as believers, we can help each other with that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And through Jesus' death and resurrection, the whole cosmos turned the corner from darkness back into light. Light was the first thing God created in Genesis 1, and it is where the Bible ends in Revelation 21 and 22: 21:13¹³The city (the New Jerusalem, that is) does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24²⁴The nations will walk by its light...

22:5⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

So, that is our destiny, Darrell, in the new creation. We will live in the place where God himself just is our light. You know, the first thing God created was not the sun to shine, just light...he just made light...and at the end, there is just going to be light. No proximate source, just light; and we will live in that light. The challenge is for us to live that way already now.

DARRELL DELANEY

We look forward to the day where there is no more darkness; there is no more sin; no more evil; and no more temptation. We look forward to that; but we can actually borrow the hope that we have for that day and live in this day as in opposition to...we are resisting that life...we don't want that life anymore...because we have been crucified with Christ and we now live a new life; and we are excited about that.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And, of course, as you said, too, Darrell, there is grace abounding for those times when, alas, we do cave into temptation now and then, but the hope is that we can avoid the need for that as we more and more grow and mature in Jesus. God hears our prayers; he answers our prayers; thanks be to God.

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Darrell Delaney; and join us again next time as we conclude our study of the Lord's Prayer. Connect with us at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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