

Monday Morning Rewind – May 31, 2010

Today's rewind is a week late, but better late than never, right? The sixth petition of the Lord's prayer is actually a plea for divine guidance: "Lead us not into temptation." The request for God to "lead" implies that we need guidance, but for what? Could it be that because the previous petition deals with forgiveness of sins in the past, the guidance we need is in avoiding sins in the future?

Taylor Bunch said it this way: "Pardon for the sins of the past is not sufficient. We are still in a sinful world and are possessed of sinful flesh, with its continuous allurements toward evil. We are not only in daily need of the forgiving grace of God to cover the transgressions of the past, but we also need divine leadership as we face the temptations of the future."

But would God ever lead us into temptation? Rewind to James 1:12-14 to find the answer. One of the things James reveals to us in this passage is that **God doesn't tempt us to sin; the source of temptation is within.** (See also Prov. 14:1; 19:3.) It becomes clear that **because of our sinful natures we are implanted with the seeds of self-destruction.**

Therefore, the petition, *Lead Us Not into Temptation* is a plea for Jesus to take the wheel and steer us clear of a crash of our own making. It's saying, "Don't let me crash into the ditch of death even though there's something within me that makes me fascinated with it."

This is why simply asking for pardon for "sins" [small "s"] past is not sufficient. We still have "Sin" [big "S"] that is part of us and constantly pulls us away from God. Forgiveness must be followed by transformation. God didn't just restart a diseased heart with the defibrillator paddles of forgiveness, but He takes away the old heart of stone and creates in its place a new heart of flesh—a heart with His law written on it.

God doesn't tempt, but He does test. In Matt. 6:13, the word "temptation" is a word meaning "a putting to proof" or simply to "test." Think of Malachi 3:10 ("Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and *prove* me..." Or "*Test me in this.*") Whether "temptation" becomes a proof of righteousness or an inducement to evil depends on our response. If we resist it in God's power, it is a test that proves our faithfulness; if we do not resist, it becomes an enticement to sin.

Rewind to Deut. 8:2. Does God test? For what purpose? Here the reasons are given: to humble them (lose their self-dependence and learn to depend on Him), and to see whether or not they would follow Him. (obedience) **God's purpose for trials is that we learn to depend on Him and follow His commands.**

When a new airplane is designed and built, it is placed in a tunnel to undergo high wind currents to test the wing structure for stress. The purpose of this testing is to prepare the plane for the worst storms it could ever encounter. That is what God is doing for us when He permits us to face testing. Rewind again to 1 Cor. 10:13 to see the following facts about temptation:

1. It is common to man. Being tempted is not a sin. If it were, Jesus would be the most sinful person because He was tempted more than anyone. **Temptation is inevitable, but succumbing is optional.** *The prayer is not to keep us from temptation (an impossibility), but rather to be divinely led to keep from falling when the testing comes!*

2. God sets limits on temptation. There is a line He will not let Satan cross. The devil can't *make* us do anything but if we open His "email," we'll be infected with his virus. Remember, **if God leads you to it, He'll bring you through it, but if you deliberately embrace it, God will often let you have it.** Don't put yourself in harm's way. You can't ask God to lead you not into temptation while running full speed into it.

Our responsibility is to "Resist the devil and he will flee." (James 4:7) But how do we do this? "Watch and pray, that **ye** enter not into temptation." (Matt. 26:41) Notice that "*you*" are the one who enters into temptation, so your best defense is to *pray*. The devil can't make you do anything, but like God, he'll take you wherever you consent to be led. Our wills are sovereign, that's why we pray: "*Thy will be done.*"

3. You will be tempted. Not if, but "*when* you are tempted..." So be ready.

4. God will provide an escape. If God brings you to it, He will get you through it

Consider Matt. 4:1 – "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil." The devil did the tempting, but God did the leading. God's purpose was to strengthen Jesus. Satan's purpose was to destroy Jesus. The outcome depended on who Jesus depended on—Himself or God. It's the same with us.

The devil couldn't make Jesus do anything. Why? Because He refused to be led by anyone other than the Father. Jesus trusted only one voice. The question is will you trust His?

But does Jesus understand what you're going through? Yes. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in **all points tempted** like as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus has been there and done that and He's a reliable guide. Ask Him to lead you!

On the last night of His life, Jesus said, "The ruler of this world approaches. He has no power over me" (John 14:30). No, the devil couldn't make Jesus do anything, but God led Him through everything. And as He was with Jesus at the Jordan, He was with Him at Gethsemane. As He was with Him in the cradle, He was with Him on the cross. And as God is with us in triumph, He remains with us in Trial. Wherever you find yourself today—on the mountaintop or in the valley, if God led you to it, He'll bring you through it. Trust Him to be your guide. —Pastor Randy

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2 Chron. 7:14

"The need is great. The key is prayer. The time is now."