

Keep Us Trusting You

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, East Van. I wish I could be there with you. Each of the times that I have had a chance to preach in your context and your congregation, I've thoroughly enjoyed the time.

Even as I'm thinking about you now, I can see some of you, some of you who sit over there, some who sit over there in the conversations we've had. And of course, I enjoy any time I can partner with Jade.

I just bless Jade as a faithful, loving, gracious, creative pastor. So, it's great to be with you in this different kind of medium. Let us pray.

Dear God, we thank you for your word. Thank you for the opportunity to gather around it. And I pray now, in your mercy and grace, that you would take us deep into the reality to which your word points, that we may be able to live more faithfully in the world.

For Jesus' sake, in whose name we pray, amen. Well, we all encounter them. These times when our faith is tested.

[1 : 05] These times when we're tempted to disobey the will of God. The times when we're tempted to go away from the ways of the kingdom of God.

What do we do in such times? Let's say tomorrow at the office. You're tempted to do something that you know is wrong, that you know is unethical.

Or you're working on your taxes, and you know that you can make a little more money if you just withheld some information. Or you're at an event, and you're approached by someone of the opposite sex.

The chemistry kicks in, and you have a sense of where this is going to go. Or someone has deeply hurt you, and the opportunity presents itself to exact revenge.

Or there's been a great loss in your life. A financial loss, health loss, a loved one has died. Over the past weeks, Ken has been saying, God is on your side.

[2 : 08] But in this circumstance, it certainly doesn't feel that God is on your side. What do we do in such moments? Answer? Answer? We pray the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer.

Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Over the past weeks, we've been making our way through the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray, the so-called Lord's Prayer.

And so let's, again, turn to that prayer. We find it in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 6, verses 9 through 13. Let me read these words.

They're familiar to you by now. Matthew, chapter 6, verse 9. This, then, is how you should pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors.

[3 : 16] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. This is God's Word. Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

You might recognize there are two parts to this sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. And many people are troubled by the wording of the first part. Do not lead us into temptation.

Oh, Father, Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, Father that Jesus knows and loves, do not lead us into temptation. They're troubled because why do we need to ask God the Father not to do what is not in His character to do?

lead us into temptation. That is not in God's character to do, to entice us with evil. So why pray?

Do not lead us into temptation. This is why other versions render the sixth petition, do not lead us to the test, or do not lead us into a time of trial.

[4 : 27] So, let's dig a bit deeper here. The Greek word that's used in the prayer is the word pyrosomos, P-E-I-R-A-S-M-O-S, pyrosomos.

Now, in the first century, pyrosomos had two different meanings, test and tempt. It meant to test as lead into a time of trial, and it meant to tempt as in lead into enticement to sin.

Every event, every happening, every challenge of our lives is a pyrosomos. It's either an opportunity to prove and improve our faith in God, or it's an opportunity to give into unbelief and disobedience. Whether or not an event, a challenge, or happening is a test or temptation depends upon who's behind it and how we respond to it.

Let me clarify further. There are two truths, two facts about God and a pyrosomos. The first is that God does not tempt.

[5 : 42] Later on in the New Testament, we have this letter called James. And in James 1, verse 3, we read, Do not say when you are tempted, I am being tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. Again, it is not in the character of God to entice us with evil.

So God does not tempt. But God does test. We see this in the life of Job. We see it in the life of Abraham and Sarah.

And we see it in the life of Jesus Himself right after His baptism. He's led into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. And He is tested. Job tested.

Abraham and Sarah tested. Jesus tested. Yes, to prove and improve. To prove that faith is there and then to improve the quality of that faith.

[6 : 42] So God does not tempt, but God does test. So go back to the first part of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer.

Back to the troubling wording. If God does not tempt anyone, why pray, lead us not into temptation? Why bother asking God not to do what God would never do?

But on the other hand, if God does test everyone, why pray, do not lead us to the test? Why bother asking God not to do what God intends to do?

Should I say all that again? If God does not tempt us, why pray, do not lead us into temptation? Why bother asking God not to do what God would never do?

But if God does test, why pray, do not lead us to the test? Why bother asking God not to do what God plans to do? Why should we be an exception?

[7 : 48] Is there a way to resolve this dilemma? Yes, there is. It is by taking seriously the second part of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer.

The first part of the petition is interpreted by the second part of the petition. But rescue us from the evil one interprets, do not lead us into temptation.

How? Now, the evil one enters the test and seeks to turn it into temptation. What is meant to build us up to prove and improve, the evil one now gets involved and tries to make it something that tears us down and even destroys.

You see, we have to remember that we do not live in a neutral universe. We have an adversary who seeks to wreck havoc in the world as we can see right now.

The apostle Paul, by anyone's measure, a very intelligent man, knew about human greed and human evil and human selfishness and human racism.

[9 : 02] He knows all about all of that human sin at work in the world. But he also recognized that there's more going on. And so, in his letter to the Ephesians, he says, our struggle is not with flesh and blood.

Our struggle is actually not with human beings. Our struggle is with the spiritual forces of darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Pastor Richard Halverson served as the chaplain of the United States Senate a number of years ago.

And Halverson said, on the floor of the United States Senate, no adequate understanding of history can be had without taking into account that behind and around and through history, a personal, diabolical, satanic, spiritual force is bent on destroying all good and its author, Jesus Christ.

Bent on destroying all good and its author, Jesus Christ. Halverson then says, this is true of our lives. This same force works to possess our minds and hearts to coerce us to reject God's love and rule.

This enemy enters our challenges, different happenings, different circumstances of our lives that are meant to be tests and turns them into temptations.

[10:24] So, I have suggested that we then render the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer this way. Father, as you lead us to the test, do not let the test become a temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

Father, as you lead us to the test, which he's going to do, do not let the test become a temptation. but rescue us from the evil one.

Now, it's helpful to ask, why does God test? Answer, because life, life in all of its fullness is found in relationship with the living God.

Am I right? Life in all of its fullness is found in relationship with the living God. And the essence of that relationship from our side is trust, faith.

In the Bible, we read about the living God making covenants with humanity. And if you read through the Bible and read through those covenants, you'll see that in every covenant, you find these same phrases.

[11:38] I will be your God and you will be my people. I will be your God. Everything that makes me be God, I place at your disposal. All that I am as God, I give to you and you will be my people.

And you will be my people means trust me. I'm giving everything I am to you and your responsibility is to trust me. Now, God so wants to refine our trust, our faith, that he leads us into the test.

This word, pyrosmos, was actually used of goldsmiths. Goldsmiths. Goldsmiths takes a hunk of dirt out of the ground and he knows he has some gold in it and he puts this hunk of dirt into a hot fire, one, to prove that there's gold and two, to improve the quality of the gold.

God does that with our faith. Puts us into situations to prove that we do have the faith and to improve the quality of the faith. Now, the very circumstance or very situation that God intends for our good, the evil one enters into and manipulates to keep us from all-out confidence in the Father. He does not want us to trust the Father because he does not want us to have life and so he sneaks into the Father's tests and turns them into a temptation and in those moments then we pray, Father, as you lead us to the test, do not let the test become a temptation but rescue us from the wiles of the evil one.

[13:20] We are not strong enough to stand on our own. You've got to rescue us. Now, what also helps is becoming more and more aware of how the evil one turns a test into a temptation and I'm going to commend to you two resources to help us.

the first is a resource from the 17th century, almost 400 years ago, by the pastor Thomas Brooks. He wrote a book entitled The Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices.

It's a massive book where he just spends all this time, I don't know where he got the time, and tries to understand all the different ways the enemy comes at our souls. It's a thick book and you can get the PDF online and it has eight pages of introduction.

Eight pages introducing it, let alone then unpacking it. So, I thought it would be helpful just to read a little bit of it. Satan's Devices to Draw the Soul to Sin. For example, by presenting the bait but hiding the hook.

Boy, we know that one, don't we? Making that sin sugar-coated but hiding the hook that's going to get us. Another one. By painting sin with virtuous colors.

[14:39] This isn't so bad. This is a lovely thing to do. By showing to the soul the best men's sins and by hiding from the soul their virtues, their sorrows, and their repentance.

What he's saying is by the enemy wants to say, well, even the best people sin. So, don't sweat it. Don't worry about this. By presenting God to the soul as the one who is made up of only mercy. Meaning, the evil one wants to say to us, yeah, God is merciful and he doesn't really care about whether we obey. You know, he's that grandfather he figure, he doesn't really care. Boys will be boys, girls will be girls.

By representing to the soul the outward mercies enjoyed by people who walk in sin and their freedom from outward miseries. You know this tact.

He shows us, look, these are all these people who are disobeying the ways of God and look how rich they are. I mean, look how their lives are just so easy. They get to take all kinds of vacations and have all kinds of cool cars.

[15:39] Why are you sweating this thing about obedience? He goes on, by causing saints to compare themselves and their ways with those who are reputed to be worse than themselves.

Well, at least I'm not as bad as that really bad sinner. And on Brooks goes, another section called Satan's devices to keep souls from holy duties, to hinder souls and holy services, to keep them off

their religious performances.

So, one of the strategy is to present to the soul the difficulty of performing religious duties. Boy, we hear that in our head a lot. Oh, that's going to be a lot of hard. That's hard work. You don't need to work that hard to be holy.

Or by presenting to view the fewness and poverty of those who hold to religious practices. Not that many people in Vancouver want to live this way, so what are you sweating it?

And besides, those who want to live a holy life turn out to be the losers. You've heard that in your head. Or by showing saints that the majority of people make light of God's way and walk in their own heart.

[16:40] Why are you sweating this? Look at the majority of people who really don't care about God and so why are you fretting so much? And then he goes on and on and on and I could read some more but those are just eight pages of the introduction.

I commend this work to you. Again, you can get the PDF online. But the best resource of all, of course, would be the Bible where we learn how to understand test becoming temptation. and especially the story of Jesus' own experience of his test becoming a temptation. The story of his 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness after his baptism.

At his baptism, Jesus receives the affirmation of his identity. You're my son. He receives affirmation of his place in the Father's heart.

I love you. I'm well-pleasing with you. And he accepts his vocation. He's going to be God's servant king. He's going to be the one who reaches the highest place in the universe by first going to the lowest place.

[17:43] He's going to win the world by the suffering of the cross. And then immediately he is led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness to be tested.

It's often translated, Matthew 4, 1, that he's going to be tempted. But the word, as we've learned, also means tested. Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tested. And we read then in Matthew 4, beginning at verse, I'll just read verses 1 to 5.

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.

Jesus answered, It is written, Man does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Now, in that first round, there are three rounds of the testing become temptation. But in that first round, I see some of the moves of the evil one seeking to turn tests into temptation. He begins by focusing on the negative.

[18:54] Focusing on the negative, he gets us to be suspicious about the love of God. And then once suspicious about the love of God, he encourages us to take charge of our own lives.

So he begins by focusing on the negative. stones, Jesus, turn these stones into bread. The implication he is saying to Jesus, There's no bread out here. There's no water out here.

They're just these stones. This is really pitiful, Jesus. Now, Jesus knows they're just stones. But the enemy wants him to be preoccupied with the fact they're just stones.

And he does the same for us. He wants us to focus on what we've lost and what we lack. Instead of focusing on the God of the impossible who is in the midst of our loss and in the midst of our lack. We have to pay attention to our lacks and to our losses. But the enemy wants to focus on that. He focuses on the negative. And then, sow suspicion about the quality of the Father's love.

[19:56] If you are the Son of God, he says. He's not calling into question whether Jesus is the Son of God. And Jesus wouldn't have doubted that. He's calling into question the quality of the Father's love for him.

If you're the Son of God, what are you doing out here? This is miserable, Jesus. I heard, too, the same words at the baptism. This is my Son whom I love.

And here you are out in the... It's been 40 days and 40 nights. It seems to me something's wrong, Jesus. You say the Father loves you?

I mean, I don't want to be disrespectful, but it doesn't look like it to me. The evil one wants us to make false deductions from our circumstances about the quality of our lives.

The evil one wants us to think that if we're in a desert place, it's because we've been deserted. And then, having focused on the negative and sowed the suspicion, he then encourages Jesus to take control of his own life.

[21 : 01] Tell the stones to become bread. I hear in between the lines there that he's saying to Jesus, look, you've been here 40 days and 40 nights. That seems to me long enough to wait for God to help you.

Take charge. End the fast. He's not going to come and get you. If you obey God anymore, you're going to be hungrier and thirstier. You might die out here.

The only person who's going to care for you and take care of your life is you, Jesus. Turn the stones into bread. You ever heard that in your head? Of course you have. And so he comes into a circumstance where the Father means it to be a test and turns it into a temptation by focusing on the negative, making us suspicious about the love of God, and then encouraging us to take life into our own hands.

It is written, says Jesus, it is written, man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The point, I will not end this fast until the Father tells me, because obeying the Father is better than bread.

And I will obey my Father, Jesus is saying, I will obey my Father even if it means more days without bread. Even if.

[22 : 24] That's the key. Even if. I will still do the will of God. Even if I don't get that promotion.

Even if I don't make more money. Even if. I don't get in on that perceived pleasure. Even if. I suffer the rejection of my peers.

So where are you struggling struggling to trust God with all out confidence? Where are you struggling to do His will?

Where are you tempted to take the shortcut? Where are you tempted to let the ends justify the means? What are you facing which brings into question that God is really on your side?

What are you facing where you're doubting the love of God? Pray the sixth petition of the Lord's prayer. Father as you lead me to the test do not let the test become a temptation but rescue me from the subtleties of the evil one who doesn't want me to trust you.

[23 : 34] C.S. Lewis the Oxford scholar who Ken quotes probably every time understood this and he writes about it in his famous book The Screwtape Letters.

Screwtape is a senior devil who is writing to his nephew Wormwood a junior devil whose job it is to destroy a Christian's faith.

And Screwtape tells Wormwood about the principle of undulation. Screwtape tells Wormwood that the Christian life is an undulation it's a up and down it involves troughs and peaks and Screwtape says to Wormwood Christians forget that and we can use it to our advantage.

Screwtape writes this it is during such trough peaks more than during the peak periods that it the Christian is growing into the sort of creature God wants it to be.

Hence the prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please him best. I know some of you are facing some tough times. Worship offered in the state of dryness pleases him best.

[24 : 55] And then Screwtape says this do not be deceived Wormwood our cause is never more in danger than when a human no longer desiring but still intending to do our enemy's will by our enemy of course he now means God to do our enemy's will looks around upon a universe from which every trace of him seems to have vanished and asks why he's been forsaken and still obeys.

Father as you lead us to the test do not let the test become a temptation but rescue us from the evil one's lies.

Keep us trusting you we pray in Jesus name Amen. Amen.