

The Power to Resist Temptation  
I Corinthians 10:13-17

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A minister parked his car in a No Parking Zone and left this note on the windshield: "I've circled the block ten times and cannot find a parking place. If I do not park here, I will miss my appointment. 'Forgive us our trespasses.'" When the minister returned there was a ticket on his windshield along with this note: "I've been circling this block for ten years. If I don't give you a ticket, I will lose my job. 'Lead us not into temptation.'"

In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for provision—*Give us this day our daily bread*. We pray for forgiveness—*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*. We pray for DELIVERANCE—*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. Once more we have here a Hebrew parallelism. *Lead us not into temptation* is exactly the same as *deliver us from evil*. The two statements mean exactly the same. Let us explore these two statements to see if we can understand what Jesus was trying to say to us in the hour of prayer.

LIFE IS A TEST.

*Lord, this time you gave me a mountain, a mountain too steep to climb. Tempted and tried, I'm oft made to wonder, why it should be so all the day long? All my trials, Lord, gonna soon be over.* Our songs state it clearly. To live is to face troubles, some too heavy to bear. To live is to struggle with temptation, some with a power of its own. No, no, it's not an easy road. Life is difficult. It always has been and always will be. Like Job of old, we have a choice. We can curse God and die, or take the challenge and live.

Most of the temptations lie deep within us. Comedian Sam Levinson used to say, "Lord, lead us not into temptation, don't even tell us where it is. We are quite capable of finding it on our own."

One of my favorite prayers is: "So far today, God, I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper, haven't been grumpy, nasty, or selfish. I'm really glad about that, but, God, in a few minutes I'm going to get out of bed and from then on I'm going to need a lot of help."

Robert Fulghum said, "I jumped out of the frying pan into the hot water. I was looking for trouble and got into it as soon as I found it. The devil made me do it the first time, but after that, I did it quite well on my own."

In 600 A.D. Gregory the Great said there are seven deadly sins from which all our struggles stem: **Envy**—my displeasure at the good of another. It is a lot easier to weep with those who weep than to rejoice with those who rejoice. **Greed**—the

need to get, to have, to hold. Money, power, prestige, perks. **Gluttony**—addictions to eating and drinking. Appetites that go unrestrained. **Anger**—rage, resentment, bitterness. Getting even instead of getting over. **Sloth**—apathy, despondency, “I don’t care” attitude about all of life. **Lust**—love distorted by turning people into things and using them for selfish gain. **Pride**—superiority. Considering ourselves better than others or praying as the Pharisee did, “God, I thank you I am not like other people particularly the tax collector that sits next to me in the synagogue.”

Paul says, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to all humankind” (I Corinthians 10:13). When it comes to temptation, we are not special. There are no exceptions to the rule. Lust is the same on the street or in the stateroom. Pride is a problem on campus and in culture. Addictions know no social class. Abuse of children by clergy is no less a crime than by perverts. Unless there is within us that which is above us, we shall soon yield to that which is about us. So we pray, as Peterson translates this phrase, “Keep us safe from ourselves and the devil.”

Evil lurks all around us. “Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world and repent of your sin?” We ask people that Sunday after Sunday when they join this church. What we are up against is not simply some personal faults and petty temptations. We are up against the “principalities and powers of darkness and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Henry Emerson Fosdick used to say, “Lo, a host of evil surrounds us.” Indeed, it does. As we surrender to the dark art of war, let us not stoop to the low values of Saddam Hussein. May we Americans hold a higher view of human life than our enemy, and walk more humbly the road to victory. When it comes to Western values, with our burning greed of materialism and tantalizing temptation of hedonism, might we not pause to see why other cultures of the world hate us so very, very much?

While the Bible encourages us to flee temptation, we make television shows about Temptation Island. While the Bible encourages us to be an example of goodness, we glory in the person who finds a way to slide by. While the Bible encourages us to remember the poor, we remain slaves to our greed for more.

Oscar Schindler was a daring German hustler who daily risked his life employing his wealth and wiles to save the lives of 1,200 Polish Jews. After the war, Schindler abandoned his wife, became a womanizer and drunkard and fell into destitution and dependence on others. He even pawned the gold ring fashioned for him from the false teeth of those he saved. Oscar Schindler found his life only to lose it again. There are powers of darkness tempting all of us to become less than we are. So we gather in worship to pray, “O, Lord, deliver us from evil.” The Good News is that is exactly what God does. God is able to deliver. DELIVERY IS POSSIBLE, or as Paul says, “God is faithful.”

Help is on the line. I have been glued to the TV as reports about the daring rescue of POW, Jessica Lynch, came pouring in. What made an Iraqi lawyer risk his life to give a tip? What bravery was shown by US commandos who rescued her last Tuesday! What work is being done by medical personnel to restore her health! If you were Jessica Lynch, would you be anything but grateful for being alive?

Our God is able to make a good delivery. He delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt. He delivered Daniel from the lion's den. He delivered David from Goliath. He delivered Peter from prison. He delivered Jesus from the Cross. *God knows how to rescue godly people from their trials* (II Peter 2:9). *Call upon me in the day of trouble and I shall rescue you* (Psalm 50:15). God makes a good delivery. That is the promise of the Scriptures.

An African Christian talking about his own conversion described it with this analogy: "I was wandering along in the grassland when I suddenly heard a noise behind me. It was a black water buffalo charging toward me. I ran as fast as I could but the buffalo ran faster. It got so close I could feel it breathing behind me. Suddenly there appeared a large iron crate in front of me. I took one giant leap and I was saved." It is that kind of rescue that we need.

Karl Barth said, "To be saved does not just mean to be a little encouraged or a little comforted or a little relieved. It means to be pulled out like a log from the burning fire."

*In loving kindness Jesus came, my soul in mercy to reclaim  
And from the depths of sins and shame, thro' grace he lifted me  
From sinking sand, He lifted me, With tender hand, He lifted me  
From shades of night to plains of light  
Oh, praise His name, He lifted me.*

God makes a good delivery. He comes with help on the line.

HE COMES WITH NEW LIFE AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME.

Young mothers here know how to make good deliveries. You brought a new life into this world. You gave your family good reasons to rejoice. You have made grandparents happy. There was great joy and rejoicing because of the gift of new life.

Somebody here today is thinking, "It is too late for a rescue effort for me. I am dead to my trespasses and sin. I've gone too far, waited too long. All that's left is a corpse." I have Good News for you! God, through Jesus Christ, came to give you new life.

Betty Hutton was a famous movie star and huge box office attraction back in the 1940's and 50's. But Betty Hutton lost her way. She had family problems,

emotional problems, illness, bankruptcy, depression and alcoholism stole her life away. In her trouble she cried to the Lord for help and the Lord heard her cry. The Lord delivered her from the forces of wickedness, restored her soul, and gave her a new life.

By God's grace Betty Hutton made a comeback in the theatrical world playing Mrs. Hennigan in the Broadway musical *Annie*. At the performance the program notes contained extensive biographical sketches of the cast members—except for Betty Hutton. Under her picture and name there were five words. “I am back, thank God.” The greatest news for somebody here today in the simple act of Holy Communion would be that you could walk from this place and say in the depths of your soul, “I am back, thank God.”

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
Change my heart, O God.  
Make it ever true.  
Change my heart, O God.  
May I be like you.











