

WEEKEND Edition 14/15 May 2022 "Stand Firm" (Matt. 6:13; James 1:13,14)

Good weekend to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends, all around the world,

As we are working our way through the famous prayer Jesus used as an example for His disciples when teaching them about the power and reality of PRAYER conversation with God Almighty, we've come to this statement: **"And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."** (Matt. 6:13) Now I wonder what that means to you my friends, wherever you live in cities and towns all around our world?

Since this prayer is being offered up TO God, does the first part of the statement seem strange? Would God ever lead us INTO temptation? If so, why? If not, was this just a poor choice of words by Jesus?

We've been sitting with Matthew on that hillside working through his record of what Jesus said that day, and I wonder if, when it came to his writing this line, Matthew rubbed his chin a while, trying to make sure he got it right. Jesus had promised His disciples, in the upper room that night before He went to the cross, that when He sent the Holy Spirit to them *one of the roles of the Spirit would be to help these men remember accurately what Jesus had said so they could teach others what Jesus had taught them.* (John 14:26)

So, what did Jesus mean by this strange but powerful statement, in prayer to God: **"Lead us not into temptation..."**? James, the author of the short 5-chapter book, toward the end of the New Testament, which bears his name, wrote this: **"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does God tempt anyone..."** (James 1:13) Well, that is straightforward and very clear isn't it. We know God is HOLY, that is an oft repeated attribute of God that we see throughout the entire Bible.

In fact, John, the disciple, and very close friend of Jesus, wrote this: **"This is the message we have heard from Jesus and declare to you: 'God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.'" (1 John 1:5)** When the Bible uses the contrast of light and darkness it is always referring to good & evil or truth and untruth. *So, John is very clearly saying that Jesus made it clear: God is Holy, God is True, God is Pure and there is not even a hint of evil or untruth in Him.* Now we understand this, right my friends?

James was led by the Holy Spirit to continue writing about God and temptation by saying this: **"Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."** (James 1:14,15) I really like that explanation. It's easily understood, isn't it?

And by using conception, pregnancy, and birth as a model that we are all very familiar with, we can look into the mirror, deep into our own eyes, and ask the question: *'so, where does temptation come from in ME? And what causes temptation to grow inside me to a full-blown birth of sin?'* James makes it clear... temptation starts with our 'own evil'.

We must understand we are all born with a sin nature. That sin nature is like a magnet drawn toward evil temptation. In our human natural condition temptation finds fertile soil in our sinful hearts and minds, and it doesn't take long for thoughts and feelings to lead to wrong choices, and then sinful words or attitudes or actions come pouring out of us. When you are surrounded by other people like you, you don't even notice, do you? Everyone is using the same foul language, everyone is telling and laughing at the same immoral jokes. Everyone is lusting after women or men, everyone is cheating and lying... that's the world we live in. *An evil immersed world under the strong influence of the evil one, the devil, right?* (1 John 5:19)

But when a person trusts Jesus Christ to be their Savior, and has the Holy Spirit living within them, they have a new spiritual nature, and they now have an awareness of the evil around them. That's the Holy Spirit alerting you to evil and temptation. The Holy Spirit has a responsibility to warn the Jesus follower of temptation and schemes from the dark kingdom. It's like a radar system warning of incoming evil attacks. Now watch this friends: *God has given to all of us FREEDOM to think and choose, thus for the Christian, while we sense the warning of the Holy Spirit, that evil temptation of the dark kingdom is trying to draw us to sin, **we need to make a choice!***

Jesus calls us to stand firm in our relationship with Holy God and resist that temptation, not yield to it, reject it and the devil, and continue living victoriously for God's glory and honor! But we have the freedom to reject the warning and help of the Holy Spirit! Yes my friends, *when we become redeemed followers of Jesus Christ we are not in bondage to Him, we are not robots, we still have full freedom to think and choose, and we have the ability to actually refuse the warning of the Holy Spirit and intentionally yield to temptation and intentionally sin!* And it happens every day, in millions of people claiming a relationship with Jesus, doesn't it?

This is why the second part of what Matthew recorded for us is so important: ***"But deliver us from the evil one!"*** Jesus is making several things very clear, which we need to hold tightly as we try to live God honoring lives in a wicked world...

1. *There is an 'evil one'! His name is Satan. He is the Sovereign over the dark kingdom of evil.*

He has great power, but His power is less than and therefore subject to Jesus. This evil devil has one primary objective: **to OPPOSE God**, God's people, God's truth, God's purposes at all times in all places.

That means every segment of society is a battlefield for the devil... school classrooms; hospital patient rooms; anyplace a business meeting or transaction is taking place; churches, homes, and especially the place where you engage with technology which brings you information or entertainment.

2. *Deliverance from this 'evil one' is possible but not automatic. It will be a battle.*

You and I cannot defeat the temptations or influence or power of the 'evil one' without God's help. Why? Because God's power is the only power more powerful than the 'evil one'. Thus, anytime you or I experience deliverance from temptation, or we turn away from sin, it's when Almighty God is working in us empowering us to defeat the 'evil one'.

3. *This Scripture is very powerful, and I urge you to memorize it* so you have it as a weapon next time you are tempted by the evil one: **"So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. No temptation has seized 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, God will also provide a way out, so that you can stand up under the temptation."** (1 Cor. 10:13)

4. We Christians, who have fully trusted Jesus Christ to be our Savior, and the Holy Spirit lives vibrantly within us, can live in this great advantage Paul wrote about: **"Be strong in the LORD and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the power of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God so WHEN the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground..."** (Eph. 6:10-13)

I like to offer you resources, my friends to help you in the battles of life that we talk about here on "Walking with Jesus", and *if this matter of temptation is a frequent battle for you*, I urge you to consider this book: Victory Over The Darkness; by Neil Anderson. His web site www.ficm.org (Freedom In Christ Ministries) has many other resources to help you.

This weekend my friends, *IF you have trusted fully in Jesus Christ to save you from your sin, then I urge you to stand firm in your Identity in Christ.* Paul wrote: **"If anyone is in Christ they are a new creation. The old has gone and the new has come, and all this is from God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ."** (2 Cor. 5:17,18) We can stand victoriously against any and all evil schemes, tactics, temptations and strategies. Stand firm friends, we're not alone, Jesus is with us and here's a song to help you stand. . .

Today's Scripture is Matthew 6:13 & James 1:13, 14.