

“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION”
Job 1:6-12, James 1:12-15, Luke 11:1-4
March 22 & 23, 2025

“You must come to my house tonight and listen to the radio with us,” Nadejda whispered to her neighbor. ‘I have never heard anything like it before. A man preaching God’s Word from the Bible. I don’t know how it happened, but these broadcasts have changed my life!’

“Nadejda Sloboda was the first one in her village to be converted through Gospel broadcasting in Russia from stations in neighboring countries (during the 1960’s). Soon, her love for God and her zealous witness brought others to Christ. Although she wasn’t a pastor, she formed a church in her village.

“As time passed, this church grew so mightily that the police had to surround the village to keep people of the nearby collective farms from coming to hear the Gospel message.

“For this, Sister Sloboda was sentenced to four years of prison. Her five children were forcibly taken away to an atheistic boarding school. Her husband was left alone.

“In prison, Sister Sloboda told other prisoners about Christ. For this, she was confined in an unheated, isolated cell, where she had to sleep on the cold, concrete floor without a mattress. Prisoners find it impossible to sleep in such conditions: Even the walls are too cold to lean against comfortably. Some report that by standing with just their forehead touching the wall, they could manage to sleep enough to survive for a few days.

“Yet Sister Sloboda was kept in this cell for two months! Not only that, during the day she was put to hard labor with the other prisoners. The Communists expected that the lack of sleep combined with the hard labor would completely ruin her health and break her resolve to stand for her faith. Yet she never weakened.

“Everybody asked, ‘How can you endure it?’

“She answered, ‘I fall asleep on the cold concrete floor trusting in God and it becomes warm around me. I rest in the arms of God.’”¹

How easily it would have been for Nadejda Sloboda to have given up her faith, having to endure such horrible conditions. Yet it seemed that in the midst of her trials and struggles, her faith did not waver, but grew even stronger. What many thought would break her faith, actually increased her faith as she leaned on God for strength and rest and warmth.

And we are also encouraged to do the same as our trials and hardships touch our lives. When we have faith in Jesus Christ, we are assured that He will be with us to provide us with the same strength and rest and warmth that Nadejda received. Though we may not yet have to face and endure prison time because of our faith in Jesus, there will come a time upon which our faith is tested.

Job certainly found that to be true in his life. In the verses that we heard in the Old Testament lesson for today, we see the backdrop of the whole situation behind the desperate struggle that Job was faced with. Having seen the faith of Job, Satan questions God whether Job’s faith was because of his genuine love for the Lord, or was it because of the blessings that God had bestowed upon him.

Satan tells God, “*You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But now stretch out Your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face*” (Job 1:10b-11). Satan challenged God to see if Job’s faith was real or if it was dependent upon his abundant possessions, his generous family, and his good health. So God allows Satan to remove all of those things from Job’s life to see if his faith was genuine or not. And as you read the rest of the book, you will find that Job clung to God, even as the bottom dropped out of his life, and everything he had was taken away, and he was left

¹ (dc Talk and Voice of the Martyrs, *Jesus Freaks*, [Tulsa, OK: Albury Publishing, 1999] pg. 141-142)

sitting upon an ash heap. Despite everything that happened to him, Job kept his faith in the Lord God Almighty. It was not because of the abundance that God had given to him that brought faith. It was the fact that Job had life, given from God, that allowed him to continue in faith through the devastation set before him.

Oh, there were questions that Job had. He even had four “friends” try to convince him that he had done something wrong that caused him to deserve all the “punishment” that was put to him. But in the end, Job was reminded of the greatness of God and the minuteness of himself. Nonetheless, Job kept his faith in the Lord God Almighty, and God rewarded him for his faith.

It’s a strong testimony that can give all of us encouragement, reminding each one of us that our faith is not dependent upon the things of this world, but rather upon the One who gives us life - the Lord our God.

This is what takes us to the “Hard Saying of Jesus” for today. In Luke 11 we find Jesus teaching His disciples about prayer, and there is a particular line in that prayer that is disturbing. Listen to our Gospel text for today and see if you can discover it. This is Luke 11:1-4. (READ Luke 11:1-4).

Did you find it? While it is good to praise God the Father, ask that His kingdom come to us here on the earth as it is in Heaven, and while it is good to ask God to give us daily bread, and to provide us with the strength and courage to forgive those who sin against us, those are not the disturbing lines. It is the final line in this prayer that Luke records Jesus teaching His disciples, “*And lead us not into temptation*” (Luke 1:4).

Many take this as a request that God not bring us to temptation so that we might not sin against Him. But if that is true, it infers that God leads us into temptation. Why would God lead us into temptation in the first place? Isn’t God good, and doesn’t God desire that we be faithful

to Him? Jesus' statement seems to imply that it is God who temps us, maybe even to try to catch us in some fault or some sin so that He then can condemn us for it and punish us because of it. But let's look at it a different way.

Rather than thinking that God leads us into temptation, instead think of this line of Jesus prayer as a request that God not bring us into the power of temptation. What this means is that when we find ourselves in the midst of temptations that may cause us to sin, this line in Jesus' prayer asks that we may have the faith and the strength not to be overcome by that temptation.

You see, just as Satan tested Job, he tests us with horrible situations in the attempt to drive us away from God, or maybe even lure us away from God by getting us to follow the world's ways with all its delights and pleasures. There is nothing that Satan wants more than to separate us from the Salvation of God, and if he can do that by hardship, or by pleasure, he will use those tests to get us to forsake our faith. He comes at us with all guns blazing against us!

But the Book of James tells us, "*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything*" (James 1:2-4).

Think of it this way. Because of your faith, Satan will work overtime to do his best to destroy that faith and separate you from Jesus Christ. But if you are not being tempted or tested, you might want to be careful, because Satan does not see your faith as a threat, and he'll leave you alone since you are not against him. But if you stand strong **in your faith**, if you are working diligently for the cause of Jesus Christ, Satan will do all he can to separate you from that faith and keep you from helping others find Jesus Christ as their Savior.

So Jesus is not inviting us to ask God to keep us FROM temptation, but rather to give us

the strength and courage TO FACE temptation and to remain faithful to Him. The testing of our faith is valuable so that we might grow stronger in our commitment to serving the Lord and become able to do great things for the completion of His ministry here on the earth. Jesus does not want us to fall away from Him, no matter what the trial or testing may be, so as we pray to the Lord, we should ask for our faith to become stronger in the heart of the temptation or in the face of the hardship so that the outcome will be stronger character for each of us.

James then encourages us, “*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*” (1:12). Remaining true in our faith commitment to Jesus Christ brings us the blessings of the Lord to use for His glory while we are here on earth.

Jesus, Himself, endured temptation directly after His baptism. “What was the nature of His ‘temptation’? It was the testing of His faith in God, the testing of His resolution to accept the path which He knew to be His Father’s will for Him in preference to others which might have seemed more immediately attractive. It was from that testing that He returned - ‘*in the power of the Spirit*’, says Luke (4:14) - to undertake His public ministry.”²

Jesus’ resolve to fulfill the work of the Messiah as the Son of God was solidified as Satan provided the options that were possible. Imagine if Jesus had failed the temptations of Satan. He could have sought to satisfy Himself with every delight, using the power that He had as the Son of God to change a stone into bread. He could have misused His power to satisfy the human nature of the body He had while He was here.

Then, Jesus could have used His power and authority to protect Himself from any enemy that came upon Him. If He could have the angels protect Him when He jumped from the pinnacle of the Temple so that He did not touch the ground, then He could have called the hosts

² (F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983] pg. 82)

of heaven to His side to drive out the Romans, or the Assyrians, or the Greeks, or any other nation that came against Him. He could have become the Messianic King that the people of Israel thought had been prophesied, freeing the nation of Israel from all enemies.

And then, Jesus could have given His allegiance to Satan in order to become the world's ultimate ruler, only to have forfeited the power of the Holy Spirit from God. Jesus could have focused upon earthly power to rule all the nations of the world, thereby giving up His heavenly power to bring all the nations of the world back into a relationship with the Lord God through the forgiveness of their sins.

No, the temptations of Jesus were given so that He would keep His focus on fulfilling His Father's will for Him, to become the Savior of the world for all those who would put their trust and faith in Him. What Satan did to try to turn Him away from the Father actually caused Jesus' resolve to be our Savior to be even greater.

So instead of Jesus inviting us to ask God to keep us from temptation, He invites us to keep our focus on following Him, to overcome the temptation, and remain faithful to Him as a servant of God to transform the world for His sake.

The Apostle Paul also brings us encouragement to remain faithful to Jesus, not falling for the temptations of Satan, but rather enduring and overcoming anything that would separate us from God. I Corinthians 10:13 is for us, as much as it was to the people in Corinth. Paul says, *“No 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.”*

God allows us to be tempted so that we grow stronger and stronger in our resolve to be His servants, enabling us to take the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all those around

us so that they might be saved by Him, too. But God will not let us become tempted beyond what we can bear so that we might remain faithful to Him.

Author and Biblical scholar F.F. Bruce states it this way. He says, “We know that our faith needs to be tested if it is to grow strong; indeed, the conditions of life in this world make it inevitable that our faith must be tested. But some tests are so severe that our faith could not stand up to the strain; therefore we pray not to be brought into tests of such severity. If our faith gave way under the strain, that might involve us in moral disaster; it would also bring discredit on the Name of the God whom we call our Father.”³

We all know the need in this world for those who profess their faith in Jesus to be able to stand strong in that faith so that they may be solid witnesses for the value of having Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord to those around them. But if we say we have faith, and that faith is not yet tested to demonstrate our faithfulness to the Lord, we may be tempted to pray, “*Lead us not into temptation*” so as to remain out of any test. Yet, Jesus’ intention for us in the praying of this petition in the “Lord’s Prayer” is that that we seek the needed strength and endurance to face temptations in order to grow stronger in character for Him.

So rather than pray that the Lord keep us from temptation, Jesus calls us to seek the strength of the Lord so that we may endure those temptations and tests that come to us so that we might be able to stay true to our call as His disciples. He is inviting us to pray “Grant, Lord, that we might not fail in the tests given to us, that we might not fall into temptation and become discredited and bring dishonor to Your Name. Grant that the test may not be so severe as to separate us from You, but that we might sustain our faith and complete Your work here on the earth.”

³ (F.F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983] pg. 83)

Jesus wants us to be successful as His servants here in our world today. He knows how endurance is created as we persevere in the center of trial and temptation. He wants us to be strong witnesses for Him, and that demands that we be tested, so that through the trials we grow closer to Him in our dependence on Him so that we might work for Him no matter what we face.

So “*lead us not into temptation*” is not a prayer to be kept from testing, but rather a petition asking God to provide us the courage and strength to endure the tests faithfully. Our prayer could then be, “May our faith stand firm in the time of trial” or “Save us *in* the time of trial so that we might bring honor and glory to You.”

It is not God who tests us, as James accurately points out (1:13-15), but He allows our faith to be put to the test so that our dedication and dependence upon the Lord Jesus grows ever so strong that we might be His witnesses. So our petition, “*And lead us not into temptation*” is a call for help from the Lord to give us the strength we need to endure trials and temptations and live as faithful servants for Him.

Let us pray...Father, thank You for the opportunity to be a servant for You. You have called us to be faithful, yet we are pummeled with all kinds of temptations and trials attempting to destroy our faith in You. Keep us strong, Lord, so that as we remain steadfast to our commitment to following Jesus in all we do and say, we may overcome all the temptations and all the trials and hardships put before us. Give us determination to not let anything in this world come between us and You. Encourage us, comfort us, hold us close, and strengthen us to never turn away from Jesus, but rather continue to serve Him in all we do, for as long as we can here in this world. This we pray in Jesus’ great Name. AMEN.