

“Lead Us Not into Temptation”

June 19, 2022

Job 6:24-7:21

Psalm 88

Hebrews 2

Why does Jesus teach us to pray,
“Lead us not into temptation.”

There are some who would say that there is no reason to pray this.
After all, God would never lead someone into temptation, would he?!

Job would beg to differ!
Job’s friends see what happened to Job, and they conclude that Job must be guilty.

But Job protests his innocence.
And Job is right.
That’s what God asks Satan –
“Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth,
a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?
He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against
to destroy him without reason.” (Job 2:3)

The story of Job reminds us that sometimes God *does* lead us into temptation.
The story of Job also reminds us that just because God leads us there,
does not mean that he has abandoned us forever!

Our Psalm of response is Psalm 88.
Psalm 88 is something of an extended meditation on Job’s problem.
Heman the Ezrahite says that he is cut off from the hand of God,
and that it is *God* who has put him in the depths of the pit.
“Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves.”
Psalm 88 concludes:
“Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless.
Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me.
They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on me together.
You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me;
my companions have become darkness
[or perhaps, darkness has become my only companion].”

The only note of comfort in the whole Psalm is the opening line:
“O LORD, God of my salvation...”

In other words, Psalm 88 cries out to God from the pit.
The only two things I know is that 1) you have put me here –
and 2) you are the one who will deliver me from here.

If you have ever known the dark night of the soul – the blackness of depression – and perhaps you are experiencing that darkness even today! – Psalm 88 reminds you that even believers – even the most faithful of Christians – will have days like this.

Job – who is one of the few men whom God calls “my servant” – of whom God says, “he is blameless and upright, one who fears God and turns away from evil” – Job spent weeks in this state.

And of course, our Lord Jesus had a day like this.
Psalm 88 is preeminently a Psalm of the cross.

But in the same way that Job *prefigures* Christ,
we who are baptized into Christ *post-figure* Christ,
as we are also called to share in his sufferings.

Sing Psalm 88
Hebrews 2

What do we pray for when we pray “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”?
I’ve given you our Larger Catechism in the bulletin:

Q. 195. *What do we pray for in the sixth petition?*

A. *In the sixth petition (which is, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil), acknowledging that the most wise, righteous, and gracious God, for divers holy and just ends, may so order things, that we may be assaulted, foiled, and for a time led captive by temptations;*

Notice first that it is God who orders things in such a way
that we *may* be “led captive” by temptations *for a time*.

But how does this work?

God does not *tempt us!*

No, it is the world, the flesh, and the devil –
notice the next line in the catechism:

that Satan, the world, and the flesh, are ready powerfully to draw us aside, and ensnare us;

Many have pointed out that the word for “evil” in the Lord’s Prayer
could very well be translated “the evil one.”

Is Jesus teaching us to pray to be delivered from “evil” generally?
Or from the evil one particularly?

I suspect that Jesus himself would shake his head at the question.

I think it's why he chose the word that he did!
You can take it either way – and both are important!

If you just think of evil in a generic, impersonal sense,
then you are missing part of the point!
In the same way, if you just think of evil in terms of the Devil,
then you are also missing part of the point!

People sometimes think that the “demonic” is really weird and bizarre.
Satan would love for you to think that!
Because then you won't notice him when he tempts you with internet porn.
You won't realize it's him, when he afflicts you with a headache,
or uses your chronic pain to wear you down.

Satan, the world, and the flesh, are ready powerfully to draw us aside, and ensnare us;

Yes, God does “lead” us there – but God neither draws us aside nor ensnares us!
The world, the flesh, and the devil draw us aside and ensnares us.

Certainly God asked Satan, “have you considered my Servant Job?”
In so doing, God painted a target on Job!
But it was Satan who sought to ensnare him.

But we cannot *blame* God for our problems.
We also cannot blame the devil, as though we are guiltless:

Because (as our Catechism goes on to say):
and that we, even after the pardon of our sins, by reason of our corruption, weakness, and want of watchfulness, are not only subject to be tempted, and forward to expose ourselves unto temptations, but also of ourselves unable and unwilling to resist them, to recover out of them, and to improve them; and worthy to be left under the power of them;

So what do we pray for when we pray “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”?

Notice that again the catechism uses the same triumvirate
of the world, the flesh, and the devil:

we pray, that God would so overrule the world and all in it, subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan, order all things, bestow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we and all his people may by his providence be kept from being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that by his Spirit we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation; or when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof: that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, Satan trodden under our feet, and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil, forever.

Our passage in Job reflects on this.

Job's friends don't like the idea that God might "lead us into temptation."

In chapters 4-5 Eliphaz suggested that maybe this is just "common wrath."

Just like good things happen to bad people.

Sometimes bad things happen to good people.

The sun shines on the righteous and the wicked alike.

The storm destroys the homes of the righteous and the wicked as well!

Compared to God, what is man?

Can mortal man be in the right before God?

Can a man be pure before his maker?

Eliphaz is willing to grant (for the moment) the possibility that Job is innocent –
but "affliction does not come from the dust...

man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

Trouble is the common lot of man.

Now, Eliphaz has a good point.

When earthquakes leveled Christchurch in New Zealand

that was an example of God's common wrath –

disasters strike the righteous and the wicked together;

diabetes, cancer, heart attacks –

these are part of God's common wrath against humanity.

Yes, in a general sense, all these things only happen because of sin –

but not because of *your* sin – rather, because of original sin –

because humanity is in rebellion against God.

Common wrath is an important category

because sometimes people think that God is "picking on them" –

when in fact, they are simply experiencing what happens to everyone.

But *sometimes* God *is* picking on you!

If you look at Job,

in a single day,

but in four separate actions,

he lost all his worldly possessions –

as well as all his ten children!

Rightly does Job say at the beginning of chapter 6,

"the terrors of God are arrayed against me"

Well does he ask,

"Why have you made me your mark?

Why have I become a burden to you?"

God is shooting poisoned arrows at me!

He's feeding me with loathsome food –
so don't be surprised that I'm braying like a wild donkey!

⁸ *“Oh that I might have my request,
and that God would fulfill my hope,
⁹ that it would please God to crush me,
that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!*

I just want to die.

But notice how he says it:

He says, “Oh, that it would please God to crush me.” (6:9)

Job is responding to Eliphaz!

Eliphaz spoke of “crushing” twice in 4:19 and 5:4 to speak of how
people are crushed by the events of life.

Job now says, “Oh, that it would please God to crush me.”

But this is not a common word.

It is only used 18 times in the OT –

6 times in Job, and 5 times in Isaiah.

It is the word used in Isaiah 53,

when it says that the Servant of the LORD

“was crushed for our iniquities” (v5)

and that “it was the will of the LORD to crush him” (v10).

Now, I'm not suggesting that Job knows this!

He does not realize that he is a picture of the Suffering Servant.

But *you* are supposed to hear the connection!

Job is thinking – I just wish God would crush me and put me out of my misery!

But God's point is that it is only through the suffering of his innocent servant
that God will bring comfort to the human race!

People sometimes say that God doesn't lead people into temptation –

but Matthew 4:1 says that Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness
to be tempted by the devil.

What God did to Job was a picture of what he would do to Jesus.

Job says this – but since he doesn't understand it, it brings him no comfort!

Job knows all the right answers.

He knows that the LORD is his help and deliverer –
but the LORD is the one pursuing him!

The LORD is the one who shooting at him!

What do you do when the one who is supposed to be your strength and wisdom
is the one who is attacking you?!!

Well, at least you can rely on your friends, right?
When all else goes wrong,
at least your friends will stand by you!

But Job says, I'm parched with thirst in the wilderness, looking for water –
and you – my friends and brothers – came to bring comfort,
to bring cool water for my parched lips –

but instead you turn against me!

- ²⁴ *“Teach me, and I will be silent;
make me understand how I have gone astray.*
- ²⁵ *How forceful are upright words!
But what does reproof from you reprove?*
- ²⁶ *Do you think that you can reprove words,
when the speech of a despairing man is wind?*
- ²⁷ *You would even cast lots over the fatherless,
and bargain over your friend.*
- ²⁸ *“But now, be pleased to look at me,
for I will not lie to your face.*
- ²⁹ *Please turn; let no injustice be done.
Turn now; my vindication is at stake.*
- ³⁰ *Is there any injustice on my tongue?
Cannot my palate discern the cause of calamity?*

Verse 30 is the key to the whole section:

“Is there any injustice on my tongue?
Cannot my palate discern the cause of calamity?”

I'm telling you that none of this is my fault.
The cause of my calamity is *God*.

If you would show covenant loyalty – if you would show *hesed* to me –
then you would either show me my fault, or join my side!

And so, since his so-called “friends” are obviously weak and foolish –
Job turns to address God.

Why does Job address God in the middle of a debate with his friends?

One commentator says it well:

“Direct address to God in the midst of formal debate...may be out of place...,
but, all [things] considered, it is only in that direction that speech has any value for Job.
The monologue of chap. 3 was impotent,
dialogue with the friends has already proved distressingly disappointing;
where else can Job turn his words than toward God?
His instinct to do so,
his single-minded assurance that it is God with whom he has to do,
will prove his salvation in the end.” (Clines, 196)

Like Heman the Ezrahite in Psalm 88,
like Peter and the 12 in John 6,
Job realizes that in spite of the absurdity of the situation,
he has nowhere else to turn!
“Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have the words of eternal life...”

And so he turns to God.

Chapter 7 is very much a prayer of “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”

1. Why Don't You Leave Me Alone? Job's First Address to God (7:1-21)

a. The Misery of Life (v1-6)

*“Has not man a hard service on earth,
and are not his days like the days of a hired hand?”*

²*Like a slave who longs for the shadow,
and like a hired hand who looks for his wages,*

A day laborer was supposed to be paid at the end of each day.
I am like a laborer who never gets paid.

³*so I am allotted months of emptiness,
and nights of misery are apportioned to me.*

And oh, how long those nights of misery are!

⁴*When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’
But the night is long,
and I am full of tossing till the dawn.*

My nights are just as toilsome as my days –
there is no rest!
And what is more,

⁵*My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;
my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh.*

⁶*My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle
and come to their end without hope.*

So where do I go, when my days end without hope?
I go to God – even though he is the one who brought me here!
And so Job pleads with God:

b. The Eye of Him Who Sees Me: God’s Eyes Are Troubling Job (v7-10)

⁷ *“Remember that my life is a breath;
my eye will never again see good.*
⁸ *The eye of Him who sees me will behold me no more;
while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone.*
⁹ *As the cloud fades and vanishes,
so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up;*
¹⁰ *he returns no more to his house,
nor does his place know him anymore.*

Normally we think of the eyes of the LORD as a good thing.
“His eyes are on the sparrow – and I know he watches me!”
But Job is not so sure.

After all, if God is pursuing me – if *he* is the one who is attacking me –
then the sooner he looks away, the better!

c. Am I the Sea? The Terrors of God (v11-16)

Finally, in verse 11, Job gives up on all his indirect complaints!

Job pours out his soul before God.
God does not expect you to “buck up” under troubles.
Job is an example of what an upright man does when undeserved trouble comes.

¹¹ *“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.*

You may not grumble against the LORD –
but you may complain!

The word “complain” can be translated, “meditate, sing, or complain.”
Psalm 55:17 says, “Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan,
and he hears my voice. He redeems my soul in safety....”
This is the word used in Psalms 77 and 119 for “meditating” on God’s words and deeds.

Scripture regularly forbids grumbling against the LORD.
Grumbling and murmuring comes from a rebellious attitude, and says,
“I’m not listening to you anymore!”
The complaint arises from the bitterness of your soul –

from your meditation on the pain and anguish of your spirit –
but the complaint still believes that God is God – and I am not!

In our church order we have a procedure for bringing a complaint.

If you are convinced that the elders have done something wrong,
you may bring a complaint to us – and if we don't satisfy you,
you may appeal it to the presbytery.

A complaint remains convinced that there is a solution – even though we don't see it yet!

On the other hand,

there is no procedure in the church order for grumbling!

I was once called in to try to help a church that was going through some difficulties.

There were lots of people who would grumble about the problems.

But I couldn't find anyone who would complain about it.

Don't be a grumbler – be a complainer!

And listen to Job's complaint!

In chapter 3, Job had raised the specter of Leviathan –
wondering if perhaps that ancient sea monster could reverse history
and go back and blot out the night of Job's conception.

But now, Job asks God:

*¹² Am I the sea, or a sea monster,
that you set a guard over me?*

Am I Leviathan?

That you treat me like I'm a threat to you!

The ancient world viewed the sea and the tannin (the sea monsters)
as powers that threatened their gods.

Why are you hunting me like you would hunt a sea monster?

And while Job's friends have proven comfortless,
not even sleep provides any relief:

Have you had sleepless nights?

*¹³ When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,
my couch will ease my complaint,'*

*¹⁴ then you scare me with dreams
and terrify me with visions,*

*¹⁵ so that I would choose strangling
and death rather than my bones.*

¹⁶ I loathe my life; I would not live forever.

Leave me alone, for my days are a breath.

Do you understand what “leave me alone” means?

Do you know what it means to say to the living God, “Leave me alone”?
We are so used to thinking of God’s presence as a *good thing*,
that we forget that *sometimes* the presence of God is dreadful!

Job understands that God is against him.

We have here the opposite of Romans 8 –
if God is against us, who can be for us?!!
If God is against me,
then what is the point?
Why are you keeping me alive?
Obviously your point is to destroy me.
Why not just finish the job?!

Do you feel like that sometimes?

If God has led me into temptation, then I am stuck here!
I see no way out!
Just put me out of my misery!

If that doesn’t turn the standard wisdom of the scriptures enough on its head,

Job goes on in verses 17-18 to invert Psalm 8

Psalm 8:4 says,
“what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?”

verses 17-18 are a bitter parody of Psalm 8:4!

d. Why Are You Doing This to Me? (v17-21)

¹⁷ *What is man, that you make so much of him,
and that you set your heart on him,*

¹⁸ *visit him every morning
and test him every moment?*

Not only is there the direct parallel of “what is man that you make so much of him,”
but also the word “visit him” in verse 18 is the same word translated,
“that you *care* for him” in Psalm 8:4.

The word simply means “to visit” –
and can be translated in a number of ways.

If you think about all the different ways that the “coming” of God can be used,
it makes sense that God’s “visit” can either be a good thing or a bad thing!
For Job, God’s visit has been a terrifying nightmare!

Job here portrays himself as a representative of all “mankind.”

What is man, that you make so much of him?

*¹⁹ How long will you not look away from me,
nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit?*

Perhaps it is not the most polite of phrases,
but it is perfectly clear!

God, I cannot take your relentless pursuit of me.
All I'm asking is,
Will you just give me enough time to swallow my spit?

In verses 20-21, Job then brings up the question of sin.
Notice that Job is not saying, "I have sinned, please forgive me,"
but rather, "if I have sinned, why do you not pardon me?"

*²⁰ If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind?
Why have you made me your mark?
Why have I become a burden to you?
²¹ Why do you not pardon my transgression
and take away my iniquity?*

Job is saying, "I am not aware of any sin that God has against me."
But even if there is some sin out there,
how are my sufferings commensurate with any such sin?

Indeed, this is precisely the sort of response we should hope for from a Christian!
I am yours, O Lord.
My sins are covered by the blood of Christ.
Why do you not pardon my transgression?

*For now I shall lie in the earth;
you will seek me, but I shall not be."*

Job again inverts the normal pattern.
Normally it is man who seeks God – "the one who seeks me will find me."
But here Job says that God will seek Job – but because Job is but a breath,
he will die,
and God will seek Job in vain.

At the end of the book, God will say that Job has spoken rightly.
What is man that you are mindful of him –
the son of man that you visit him?

God will visit Job with peace and blessing!

And while Hebrews 2 is clearly quoting Psalm 8 – rather than Job 7 – perhaps the emphasis on *suffering* in Hebrews 2 should remind us of the connection!

“at present we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.
But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus,
crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death,
so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.
For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist,
in bringing many sons to glory,
should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering...
Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood,
he himself likewise partook of the same things,
that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death,
that is, the devil,
and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.
For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham.
Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect,
so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God,
to make propitiation for the sins of the people.
For because he himself has suffered when tempted,
he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

That’s why Jesus teaches us to pray,
“but deliver us from evil” –
because Jesus himself has passed through the suffering of Job!

Jesus is the innocent suffering servant –
who because he has suffered when tempted –
is able to help those who are being tempted!

Job could only stumble dimly towards this!
You see Jesus! – crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death!
You may ask, “how can I see Jesus?! I can’t seem to see him right now?!”
How do we see Jesus?
By faith.

And so we pray, that God would so overrule the world and all in it, subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan, order all things, bestow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we and all his people may by his providence be kept from being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that by his Spirit we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation; or when fallen, raised again and recovered out of it, and have a sanctified use and improvement thereof: that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected, Satan trodden under our feet, and we fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil, forever.