

Pray Against Temptation

Sunday, May 17, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of
Marshalltown, Iowa

Luke 22:40

"When He came to the place, He said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.'"

Introduction: I recently found a story about a man who is part of the "While Helmets" brigade in Syria, working to help people caught in the crossfire of that terrible civil war. The story, in "buzzfeed.com" included the following description: "On July 11, 2014, a barrel bomb was dropped in the Ansari neighborhood of Aleppo. Khaled [the member of the brigade] arrived on the scene of the blast to help pull people out of the debris. He kept an eye on the sky, as a second bomb is often dropped to kill rescue workers. As the team pulled two families out of the debris, one of the mothers cried out desperately that her 2-week-old baby was missing. Khaled rested his head against the concrete and heard a baby crying. He called over his team and started digging through the rubble as gently as possible so as to keep the baby safe. They finally spotted the child, and using car jacks – the only tool at their disposal – they lifted the concrete slab to pull the baby out."* The baby, happily, survived the ordeal and the story came to mind when I considered what it means to pray that we "not enter into temptation." Something Jesus mentioned more than once.

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So important was the idea that He included it in the model prayer He taught His disciples, a prayer we invoke weekly. The end of the Lord's Prayer includes these words: "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." So this is something we bring before the Lord in a weekly basis, that we would not be led/enter into temptation. Fair enough, but let's look at what that means. Here it seems to refer to

temptations to sin or to failure, but the same word is used in verse 28, and there it describes "trials".

Temptations to sin, and the stress of trials.

In fact, the word has a double meaning. Fundamentally, it means to be pressed, to endure pressure, but it has come to refer to temptations to sin as well as difficult circumstances. In 1 Corinthians, it says, (1 Corinthians 10:13) "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." So the passage refers to our response and approach both to temptations to do wrong and to hard times. In a way it makes sense because the two seem to go together often. We are most likely to say, or to do something wrong when we are under pressure. And note that we are not to make too much of the trial/temptation, for such is common to humanity, but that God makes a way of escape that we may endure it. I think it is ok to pray that we avoid such trials, but we won't avoid all of them, and the way of escape much include a way to endure as well as avoid. In a real sense, I think that praying against temptation is a prayer for resiliency; to be, like that man in the White Helmet brigade, so strongly focused on the needs of others that he is not overwhelmed by his own trials of needs. That is resiliency.

Conclusion

One of our responses to time like these are to pray against temptation. Jesus incorporated such a request into the Lord's Prayer, the model prayer for His disciples, and again in His last prayer before He was arrested that fateful night. I believe that we can pray to avoid temptations and trials, but we will not escape them all. In this prayer is a call for resiliency, and that is part of when the Lord promised to provide for us in order to endure successfully what cannot be avoided.

* <https://www.buzzfeed.com/worldhumanitarianday/world-humanitarian-day>

