

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. What has amazed me so much about looking at the Lord's Prayer the way we have, is that each sentence and each phrase is just a few words but so much meaning; so much power is packed into those few words. And these two phrases are no exception.

Every day, each one of us strives to be more like Jesus, living as he did. We strive to live in a way that pleases God, according to his word and the ways he set out for us in the Bible. But every day each one of us is faced with temptations that could lead us away from God and off the path of Jesus Christ. The source of temptation is in the world around us, from within us and even from God. Don't get me wrong. At no time does God want to lead us to do that which he hates. He may however lead us into situations where we are strongly encouraged by those around us or by Evil itself to do wrong. In a sense, these are trials, as God tested our forefathers like Abraham. Like any father, God wants to see our faith grow and mature. These trials are ways in which he tests us and challenges us to become more committed to his path.

In the world around us, a fallen world, there are many temptations. All too often we are faced with the allure of other kinds of spiritual paths, promising us an easy life. We are tempted by fame and fortune and the glitter of wealth and riches. We are bombarded by messages that tell us that if we don't drive the right car, wear the right clothes or own all that opens and shuts, we are worthless. And if we can't achieve these earthly goals through honest means, there are plenty of voices encouraging us to cut corners; bend the rules and flout the law in our dealings to get ahead. Temptation can also be simple – stay up later because in lock down and working from home, no one really knows what time we start. Or give exercise and a healthy way of eating a skip just today and tomorrow, and the next day.... But none of these lead us to a place where we are right with God, where we can bow our heads at the end of the day and say I lived my day to its fullest in the way you wanted me to, Lord.

So we ask in the Lord's Prayer that he leads us not into temptation but delivers us from evil. Being a Christian is never a passive exercise. We pray and ask God, sometimes beg God for his help, his strength and his guidance. And he will never turn us away. But it is also up to us, that, with his strength, we do our part. And that means taking a good hard look at whether we court evil in our thoughts, in the way we speak to one another or in how we behave. It is not for nothing that it has been said "Inside my head is a dangerous place to be". The reality is that we spend a lot of time with our thoughts and inside our heads. Isn't it beholden upon us to ensure that it's a great place to be? 2 Corinthians 10:5 says "We break down every thought and proud thing that puts itself up against the wisdom of God. We take captive every thought and make it obey Christ". Our thoughts and climate in our heads depends very much on where we put ourselves and the company we keep. We can choose what that is. And we can choose what thoughts we think and take captive those that are not towards God. And from our thoughts become words. And once those words are out, we cannot take them back. Have you ever wished you could? Words sometimes are more powerful, more damaging, than sticks and stones. From words come actions, or not taking action when we should. In all of these, thought, word and deed, evil can exist and we have choice to do it God's way with his help, or to do it our way.

And what of the Evil One? Lead us not into temptation by deliver us from the Evil one. Satan uses temptation and evil thoughts words and deed to wreck his havoc in our world. Through division and disagreement he divides us within ourselves; he destroys families and fractures the church. Nations go to war over evil.

It feels heavy, it feels hopeless. But it's not. Our heavenly father sent his only son to die a most awful death to save us from our sins. God wants nothing more than for his children to come to him, confess their thoughts words and deeds, meekly kneeling before him and asking him for his forgiveness and to ask him to instil in us a forgiving nature so that we might forgive others. That we may be washed clean and start each new day afresh, rejoicing in his unending love and knowing that we are not alone as we go out into the world once more.