

I. Element 5: Building a Fire Wall!      Gee Sprague, Lead Pastor      February 24, 2008

A. Last week I shared about our indebtedness to God and when Jesus teaches His followers to pray he says:  
*'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'*

B. The prayer assumes that we have forgiven others in the same way God has forgiven us.

C. Many interpretations of the Gospel limit the human problem with sin to breaking rules that have been laid down by God.

D. If Salvation was based on Rules, no one could be saved.

E. Jesus introduces us to another way of understanding our relationship with God.

1. We are all debtors, who by the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross our sin debt was paid.
2. The response to that forgiven debt is to forgive anyone else who has harmed you.

F. Today we want to turn our attention toward how we deal with the everyday temptations of life. The things that distract us from living the life that God intended for us to have.

II. (Matthew 6:9-13 NASB) "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. {10} Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. {11} 'Give us this day our daily bread. {12} 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. {13} 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. <For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.>'

III. **Stains happen**

A. I love to eat! I love to eat foods with sauce. The combination is messy and will almost always produce a sauce stain on some part of my clothing.

B. If I wear a white shirt, you can be sure the menu will be Italian or barbeque.

C. I carry *Shout Wipes* and *Tide Sticks* with me, but none of those work as well as they do in TV ads.

D. I keep a spray bottle of *Shout* in my closet right next to the laundry hamper

E. I don't care how hard I try, it doesn't matter how careful I am, stains are going to happen.

1. The secret is, I don't have to like it and I don't.
2. If you are going to eat in public and enjoy life at all, "*Stains are Going to Happen*"
3. You won't have to go looking for them.

F. Knowing that, I still will try to do whatever it takes to avoid spills to keep my clothes from stains, as fruitless as it may be, my ultimate goal is to finish a meal without ruining my clothes.

G. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, I think it was with that same goal in mind that he taught them to pray, 13 *'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'*

1. For many, this statement poses a problem.
2. Some ask the question, "Why would God be leading us into temptation."

H. You can place too much emphasis on the first part of the statement and turn this into a theological debate which is really not necessary.

1. If your major concern is with how or why does God lead us into temptation, I think you have missed the point of the prayer.
2. The statement should be considered as a complete statement, not as two separate parts.
3. At least for our purposes, I want to try not to separate "*not being lead into temptation,*" from "*being delivered from evil.*"
4. They are not two distinct statements but a whole.

5. It would be like me blaming the person who ordered chips and salsa instead of a dip-less appetizer like potato skins
  - a. It was someone else's choice, therefore it is their fault that the salsa stained my cuff.
  - b. While I'm at it, let's *blame gravity too!*
6. The theological implication for us here is that almost every path of life will lead us into some type of temptation.

#### IV. **Temptation happens**

- A. In the New Testament, often we read about temptation and it might be translated better to mean testing.
- B. In my faith walk, I am fully comfortable with God allowing trials and even some tribulations to come my way, even sent my way to test my faith.
- C. Not a week goes by that I don't talk to someone about a time of testing that he/she is going through personally and professionally. But that is another sermon.
- D. Today we are dealing with the gut-wrenching, nail-biting, knuckle-scraping temptations of life that bring moral decay in our life and separate us from God.
- E. Those types of things that leave stains.
- F. God does not send this type of temptation, He doesn't have to; we usually go out and buy it for ourselves.
- G. We usually sit right down and order temptation for ourselves.
- H. We have a way of ordering the sloppiest thing on the menu and then blame the cook that we have stains all over our clothes.
- I. God doesn't have to lead us into temptation, we do a pretty good job of getting there on our own.
- J. This is not a modern problem; it has been with us from the beginning of time.
- K. St. Augustine, who became one of the leading interpreters of the Christian faith AD 354-430
  1. Early Christian church father and philosopher who served (396-430) as the Bishop of Hippo (in present-day Algeria). Considered the founder of theology, he wrote the autobiographical confessions (397) and the voluminous City of God (413-426).
  2. But as a younger man he rebelled against the faith and lived a life that completely gave way to all temptation.
  3. In his confessions he wrote, "Among my equals I was ashamed of being less shameless than others, when I heard them boast of their wickedness.... And I took pleasure not only in the pleasure of the deed but in the praise.... I made myself worse than I was, that I might not be reproached, and when in anything I had not sinned as the most abandoned ones, I would say that I had done what I had not done, that I might not seem contemptible.
- L. We all, no matter what age or position in life, deal with temptation.
- M. I agree with what Richard Orbin says, "*Most people want to be delivered from temptation But would like to stay in touch.*"

#### V. **Lead us not or.... do not lead**

- A. Actually, I believe this prayer is often prayed way too passively.
- B. We have been taught the liturgical way of praying, which is an accurate way of translating "Lead us not into temptation..."
- C. But most modern versions of the Bible translate the words "*Do not lead us into temptation...*"
  1. This seems to be a little more aggressive type of prayer
  2. Lead us not can sound a little passive if you aren't careful

3. I think we should pray a little more aggressively, DO NOT!!
4. We are saying, Father, I am not messing around here, I am counting on you to lead me in the opposite direction of sin.

D.Really very few of us ever really just jump full-blown into a life of sin, most of us were led sort of slowly and subtly into it, and one day we just find ourselves lost, sunk deeply into a pit of problems that could have been avoided had we only been led away from temptation.

E.A cattle rancher was asked how a cow gets lost, he replied, “Well, the cow starts nibbling on a tuft of green grass, and when it finishes, it looks ahead to the next tuft of green grass, and when it finishes, it looks ahead to the next tuft of green grass and starts nibbling on that one, and then it nibbles on a tuft of grass right next to a hole in the fence. It then sees another tuft of green grass on the other side of the fence, so it nibbles on that one and then goes on to the next tuft. The next thing you know, the cow has nibbled itself into being lost.

F.It is always very subtle.

G.Jim Bamford, author of *The Puzzle Palace*, a book on the National Security Agency and how secrets are obtained that concern national security.

1. He states, They don’t start by asking to get a top secret document. They usually ask for something innocuous, like a telephone directory. Once a person starts, they’re hooked at that point.
2. I have a friend who ended up losing a very good IT job because he sold a list of names to another company.
3. It all started out as just a very little thing and built to a big deal.

## VI. **Building a Fire Wall**

A.Several years ago the term Fire Wall was only used in the construction world.

B.All the rooms in this building have a two-hour Fire Wall protection and there are even a couple of areas with automatic doors that would close off areas in case of fire.

C.Now we all have Fire Wall protection on our computers to keep hackers and viruses out of our computers.

D.This part of the prayer is what I call the Fire Wall Prayer.

E.Jesus says {13} *‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil*

F.Most of us were taught to pray and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

G.A better translation is actually, *Matthew 6:13 (NKJV) And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.*

H.Don’t ever forget that we are in the middle of a battle.

I.*John 10:10 (NASB) “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.*

J.Satan is a hacker who is constantly trying to disrupt our already corrupted operating system.

K.I have prayed this for myself for over 30 years. It is amazing how it works.

L.I don’t believe the devil made me do it, but I do believe that he is very willing to cater to my dark, fallen, sinful nature.

M.In 1989 a friend of mine sold me a 1973 Orange 911 T Porsche.

1. It was a fun car to drive, and I kept it even for a couple of years after Hannah was born.
2. Hannah was in preschool at the church where I was serving back then, so I would pull into the parking lot in this two-seater with a car seat.

3. I hadn't owned it long, but I remember a day when I was driving home down San Jose Blvd, the windows open, the radio blaring and a car with a girl in her late 20s pulled up beside me.
4. I had this fleeting thought, I bet she's checking me out.
5. So I subtly glanced over my shoulder and she was sitting at the light filing her fingernails.
6. She had no clue I was even on the planet.
7. I thought, you know God, thanks for hearing my prayer, Do not lead me into temptation, but deliver me from evil.
8. Even though my pride was hurting, I was thankful that God answered my prayer.

N. Most of us are not praying, "Do not lead us into temptation."

1. We are praying, don't make me feel guilty for the sin I am in or deliver me from the consequences of the sins I have already committed.

O. But if you seriously begin to pray this prayer, you are asking God to keep you from nibbling yourself away from him and into temptation.

## VII. **Prayer leads us to Jesus.**

- A. The problem with temptation is not only with where it leads to, but who it leads us from.
- B. When we move towards temptation, it takes us away from Jesus.
- C. The purpose of this prayer is to get us closer to the One who can deliver us from evil.
- D. We are fairly powerless to ever really keep ourselves from temptation.
- E. The Good News is that Jesus is the means by which we are able to resist temptation.
- F. There was a young girl who was getting ready to join a church after accepting Jesus Christ as her Savior. The pastor asked her, "Were you a sinner before you opened your heart to Jesus?" "Yes," she replied. "Are you a sinner still?" he asked. She answered, "To tell you the truth, I feel I'm a greater sinner than ever. I used to be a sinner running AFTER sin, but now that I am saved I'm a sinner running FROM sin.
- G. That's what God wants us to be.
- H. That's what this prayer teaches us.
- I. Are you running towards sin or away from it? It's never too late!!

## VIII. **The Good Stain**

- A. (SERVERS COME FORWARD)
- B. You know in my experience of stains the one that I have had the least amount of luck with is grape juice.
- C. Several years ago Sandy and I led a service of communion at Jax Beach for a youth group.
- D. It was back in the Miami Vice days when guys were wearing these real pastels.
- E. I had on these light yellow cotton pants and a Hawaiian print shirt.
- F. The sun was setting as we closed in prayer so it wasn't until I got home and looked and all over the pants were little splatters of grape juice.
- G. The pants were history.
- H. When I served at other UM churches, the worship was traditional so I wore a robe. In this setting it seems out of place.
- I. The stole that I wore was eventually retired because of the amount of grape juice stain.
- J. Here it is, you know I am glad that the stain for grape juice is so strong.
- K. It covers the sin; it strengthens us in our temptation.

L.This week we are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

M.The last two weeks we have celebrated the Lord's Supper, passing the cups and bread in your seats and received affirmation that God is providing Jesus to be our daily bread, and the blood of Jesus is payment for the debt that we owe God.

N.Today, you are going to be asked to come forward, and you will be given a piece of bread, the broken body of Jesus, and then you will dip it into the cup, let the stain of the juice, the symbol of the blood of Jesus, be the indelible stain that cannot be washed away, the mark of Jesus Christ on your life, that says it is only by the blood of Jesus Christ that I have the power to resist sin, to flee temptation.

O.When you come today, you don't have to be perfect to receive this.

P.You just have to be willing to ask for the power to be led toward Jesus and away from temptation.

#### The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.