

## Lead Us Not into Temptation, but Deliver Us from Evil

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So, our true identity, when Ashley spoke of this, I envisioned my childhood. Growing up I had dreams of my parents sitting me down one day and telling me of my family's true identity as secret super heroes. Anyone who knows my mom knows that she could actually be Super Woman. If you have seen her drive around Clemson in her convertible the vision of her in Iconic Americana spandex with an invisible jet would completely plausible. Clearly I had an inventive imagination. However, much to the dismay of my childhood dreams, the Ware family does not possess any secret powers. I find it interesting that the super heroes like Super Man and Spider Man are normal people. They go home each day as Clark Kent or Peter Parker. This realization has started to make me notice everyday characteristics in people in every day situations that resemble super hero characteristics.

One such everyday heroic situation was described by former South African President Nelson Mandela. In his autobiography Long Road To Freedom, Mandela writes about his time as a political prisoner on Robben Island. He describes someone that when placed in a bad situation, responded in a way seemingly transformed from the assumed typical response. His simple super hero quality was a comfort to Mandela during his imprisonment.

Mandela wrote: "The most important person in any prisoner's life is not the Minister of Justice, not the Commissioner of Prisons, not even the Head of the Prison, but the warden in ones section. If you are cold and want a blanket you might petition the Minister of Justice, but you will get no response. If you go to the Commissioner of Prisons, he will say sorry it is against regulations. The Head of the Prison will say, if I give you an extra blanket, I must give one to everyone. But if you approach the warden and you are on good terms with him, he will simply go to the stock room and fetch you a blanket."

Why is it that the most important person in a prisoner's life isn't the person with the most power? Is it too obvious to note that the most unlikely of God's children have been used to perform God's will? The Woman at the well, the Good Samaritan, Ruth and Moses; all followers and Disciples of Christ, yet ordinary people. Our reactions are what make us followers of Christ. Many super heroes are praised for their decision making. Sure, their flying ability is cool, but the morals of a super hero are more widely praised. As a Christian, Disciples are our super heroes.

A super hero is created in every one of God's children, and we have the choice to use our super powers in our life. I guess when you imagine a super hero; the friendly prison guard doesn't immediately come to mind. Kindness was a gift from God, used by **disciples** and a prison guard alike, that had an impact on the Nobel Peace Prize recipient and noted politician. God equips us with the tools to be heroic to be a Disciple of Christ. In the Ephesians passage we have read, Paul describes these tools to us.

Paul describes the Armor of God or the super heroes' secret power or ability. He describes the Belt of Truth, the Breastplate of Righteousness, the Helmet of Salvation, and the Sword of the Spirit. Paul uses this analogy to describe the tools that God has given us to stand against evil and temptation in this present darkness. Paul tells us through the Gospel of good news to stand firmly in the Armor of God.

As Christians we would be presumptuous to believe that we can stand against temptation without God's armor. It is noted that among all of the tools that God has equipped us with, the only offensive weapon mentioned is a sword; the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The other tools are defensive tools. Thus, Paul's analogy is not calling for a fight, rather the ability to respond to everyday situations in a way fitting of God's will.

The simple miracle of a Disciple's god-filled response was described in a recent NPR story. Michael Garofalo's *Morning Edition* told this story in March of 2008. Julio Diaz, a 31 year-old social worker eats at his favorite diner every day after work. One evening, after exiting the subway he always rides, Diaz is approached by a teenage boy with a knife. The teenager demands for his wallet, which Diaz hands it over with no issue. The teenager begins to retreat. In a move most uncommon, Diaz calls out to the teenager. "Hey, wait a minute. If you are going to be robbing people for the rest of the night, you might as well take my jacket to keep warm." As Diaz begins to take off his jacket the confused teenager asks what he is doing. Diaz then explains: "If you are willing to risk your freedom for a few dollars, then I guess you really need the money. I was just trying to get dinner; so, you are more than welcome to join me." The teen agrees to accompany Diaz to the favorite diner. They enter and sit in a booth where they talk about their future goals and expectations. When the bill comes, Diaz says, "Look, you are going to have to pay for this because you have all of my money. However, if you return my wallet, I will gladly treat you to dinner." The teen returns the wallet, Diaz pays and they leave. Outside, Diaz convinces the teenage to exchange the knife for \$20.

This story shows how, heroic decisions can be made by every one of us. With the Armor of God we are transformed into the person God is calling us to be. Through God's grace we will be transformed to act according to God's will instead of the temptation of sin. Diaz didn't need a phone booth, or a special costume to be transformed. With the full Armor of God, the spirit was able to transform him and use him to change a bad situation for a young teenager. We pray for deliverance, for transformation so that God can work through us.

It is fitting that Paul wrote about transformation. Paul, who was transformed from his former self named Saul, underwent a major religious deliverance; from an individual separated almost completely from God into a person reconciled in God. How amazing is it that God was able to transform someone who once performed so much evil. God was able to create a most inspiring "comeback" story out of Paul. This shows by example that it is possible to be the super hero that God has called us to be. With the Armor of God and through transformation, God can use our gifts to make the world a better place for everyone.

So Christians, this Church, this one body of Christ, you have been called to stand and stand strong. Allow God to transform us to stand against the temptations of this world, against evils both intentional and unintentional. Become empowered through the Armor of God to be the disciple God is calling us to be. Pray for deliverance, for forgiveness, for transformation, for guidance. God, Deliver us from Evil but Lead us not into temptation.

Believe that the Word of God will lead us from temptation and deliver us from evil. Amen.