

## **And do not lead us into temptation.**

### **Introduction:**

The Lord's prayer continues with, "**And do not lead us into temptation.**" What do those words tell us? They indicate to us that God has the final say, even concerning how much temptation is allowed to come our way. Recall the tribulations of Job. God put a limit on the tempter and said: Thus far and no further. Even in 1 Corinthians 10: 13 we read that

**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.**

We know that

**God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone (James 1:13).**

Not only that, but He also makes sure that the temptations that do come, do not have the final sway. But if God does not tempt us, then what does? James says: "**Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed**" (James 1:14). So what can we do about it? But before answering that question, let us first think about why Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

### **1. Why did Jesus instruct his disciples to pray this way?**

Perhaps the intent of the prayer was to say *do not lead us into temptation now, at this point in time*. Jesus knew his disciples. Did he know that the disciples were still too weak, and was Jesus fearful that they may succumb to it? In John 16:12 Jesus told them, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now."

### **2. What are the reasons behind weakness?**

a) If we are too sure of ourselves, if we think we are strong, that is a sign of weakness. Recall that before his denial of Christ, Peter insisted: "**Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble**" (Matt. 26:33). But when Peter wept bitterly and realized his weakness, a change took place. After he no longer relied on his own power, he was reinstated as an apostle by Christ himself and given a significant role: *Feed my lambs, Tend my sheep, and Feed my sheep* (see John 21:15-17) We are reminded of the Words of the Apostle Paul who said:

**Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor 12:10).**

**And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Cor 12:9).**

b) Another reason for weakness may be that we have not asked for the strength we need in prayer. Before Peter's denial Jesus said to him:

**Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matt. 25:41).**

Also in Luke 22:40 we read **"Pray that you may not enter into temptation."**

c) After the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they preached the Word of God with power, and the fear that they had previously known vanished. We know that we need to be born again and to have experienced the forgiveness of sins to enter the Kingdom of God. However, we also need the power of the Holy Spirit, God's infilling power, to be effective in the Kingdom of God and to overcome all temptation. That is why Jesus told his disciples,

**Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).**

This was the fulfillment of an earlier promise when Jesus said,

**I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come (John 16:12-13).**

How about you? Have you been filled with God's Holy Spirit? If you are a child of God, the Father wants you to be filled with His Spirit. Jesus told his audience that since they know how to give good gifts to their children **"how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! (Luke 11:13).**

The Bible says: **"Ask and it shall be given unto you" (Matthew 7:7).**

Now let's get back to our earlier question, what can we do about being enticed and tempted by our own desires? What can we do so that we do not fall into sin? One answer is to flee temptation.

### 3. We are to flee temptation.

On the one hand we can ask God not to lead us into temptation. On the other hand, we are admonished to flee temptation. To Timothy, Paul wrote,

**Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife (2 Timothy 2:22-23).**

Here we have some good advice. Flee the lusts that could ensnare you, use your energy to pursue righteousness and peace and avoid arguments that are detrimental.

Two other things we are told to flee from are **"flee from idolatry" (1 Cor 10:14),** and

**“flee sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18).** We have seen how pornography and sexual immorality have ruined many a good reputation and many a successful career. The newspapers love to report on things like this. It seems to increase their sales. However, we are to flee. That means even the slightest hint and opportunity, we turn our backs on it. That means that instead of not looking, we put parameters into place that looking or not looking is not even possible, or an option.

James 4:7 reads: **“Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”**

Each one of us knows what our particular weaknesses are. Set up double precautions to overcome them. For example, a man whom I knew well, used to regularly go to the pub after work before becoming a Christian. He gave up drinking when he was converted. So how can he set up double precautions? Well, instead of just riding by the pub on his way home from work and not going in, it was possible for him to change his route home, so that he wouldn't even pass the pub on the way home. That is fleeing or setting up double precautions to avoid temptation. How can you be tempted to go in and have a drink, when you avoid the area altogether?

Martin Luther said that we cannot help that birds will fly over our heads, but we can prevent them from building a nest on our heads.

Ephesians 6:11-12 says:

**Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph 6:11-12).**

#### 4. Lead us.

We have thought about why Jesus taught his disciples to pray, **“Lead us not into temptation.”** Now let's think about the two words “lead us.”

Leading is not forcing. It is not against our will. It is guiding. We may take a blind person or a child by the hand and lead them. Or an adult may ask us to go on ahead of them so that they can follow us, as we lead them. Leading in this way is helping or guiding.

#### 5. When do we wish to be lead?

Someone who is too weak to go alone, will need to be lead. Also, if the way ahead of us is very complicated, we may prefer someone not just to give us instructions to find the way, but to actually lead the way. If the way is too dangerous, then we also will prefer a guide. For example, I would take a tour of Niagara Falls on my own, but I would not go on a Lion Safari in Africa without a guide. And lastly, if the responsibility is too great to be handled on my own, I will insist on guidance.

Moses said to God, **“If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here” (Exodus 33:15).**

God promised him, “**My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest**” (Exodus 33:14).

Other examples are Paul (Acts 9:6) and Solomon (1 Kings 3:9-10).

Moses, Paul, and Solomon wanted God to lead them. How about us? Do we ask God to lead us?

#### 6. Us.

Notice it says lead us. Not lead me. Not lead them. But lead us. Are you only concerned about yourself? Or do you include others, praying for guidance for us? Or perhaps you want others to heed God’s Word, but you do not apply it in the same way to yourself? Us is collective. It is for me and for those around us.

#### 7. Lead us not.

Why did Jesus ask his disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation?” We have already considered the option that Jesus may have realized his disciples were still weak and he wished to keep them from falling in temptation. What better way to avoid falling in temptation than to avoid the temptation altogether?

Obviously, Jesus asks them to pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” because he realizes the very real danger of not overcoming temptation but being overcome by temptation. Despite God promising to have a way of escape for us and not allowing the temptation to be stronger than we can manage (1 Cor 13:10), we also have to do our part. And to do our part effectively we are well advised to be prepared as we have already seen from Matthew 25:41 and Ephesians 6:11-12.

#### 8. Lead us not into temptation.

The Greek word *πειρασμόν*, meaning temptation is in the accusative case. It is a direct object. That means that we are not praying do not lead us in the temptation, but rather do not lead us into the temptation. But also remember that when David talks about the Valley of the Shadow of Death in Psalm 23 he says that he will not fear evil because thou are with me. In other words, if we find ourselves in temptation the Lord is still leading us there and does not leave us alone, even under those circumstances, even in temptation.

Does God tempt us? No. James 1:13 has made that clear. “**Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed**” (James 1:14). Our own lusts and desires are the reason we are tempted. Take for example 1 Timothy 6:9-10:

**Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim 6:9-10).**

Here we have see that falling into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts can stem from the desire to be rich. It is the desire to be rich that allows

temptation to enter suggesting means and ways to achieve this goal that are not right. We saw what the love of money did to Judas. He was tempted to achieve his desire and attain 30 talents of silver in a foolish way that led him to perdition and destruction. If our desires are for the things of God, then the desire for things that can lead to perdition is thwarted.

Even though God does not tempt us, we can still pray, “Lead us not into temptation” because God can keep nonetheless keep us safe. God may test us, but he never tempts us. From Genesis 22 we know that God tested Abraham. We read, **“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham” (Genesis 22:1).**

What is the difference between a temptation and a test? As a teacher, when I test my students, the test is designed for two purposes. First, it shows both the teacher and the student how far the student has progressed, what areas have been mastered and which areas need more attention. Secondly, the student prepares for the test and that enhances understanding and consolidates knowledge. Tests are there to engender confidence and growth. A temptation however is like bait on a fish hook. The bait is there to catch the fish, not there to help the fish in any way. So, temptations are there to trap, deceive, or cause you to fall. A test however is not designed to harm you. It may be difficult, but its purpose is not to harm you, but hopefully to get you to the point where you can master it.

The word tempter occurs twice in the Bible. Once in 1 Thessalonians 3:5 and once in Matthew 4:3 where Jesus was tempted. In the verses which follow, the tempter is referred to as the devil and Jesus finally calls him Satan when he says, **“Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve’” (Matt 4:10).** Next we read, **“Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him (Matt 4:11).** It is nonetheless noteworthy that **“Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Matthew 4:1).**

Perhaps it was in light of these temptations that Jesus wanted to protect his disciples and teaches them to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

It may be helpful to study the temptation of Jesus in Matthew chapter 4 to learn more about temptation from Jesus himself. This could prove beneficial if we ourselves are faced with temptation. So, before the lesson “but deliver us from evil,” we will look at the Temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4. Then we will continue with the Lord’s prayer.

### **Questions:**

1. Why does Jesus teach us to pray: Lead us not into temptation?
2. What are some of the causes of weakness?
3. How can we overcome spiritual weakness?
4. Under what circumstances would we wish to be led?
5. What does it mean to flee temptation?
6. Why should we pray lead us not, rather than lead me not?
7. What is the difference between leading “in temptation” or “into temptation?”
8. What is the difference between a temptation and a test?
9. Who is the tempter?

10. Why should we study the temptations of Jesus?