

Lead Us Not Into Temptation
Matthew 6:13
Luke 4:1-13
6th in the Series on The Lord's Prayer
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Have you ever read something and thought it was clear, but it really wasn't? Such as: "Next Exit" on an Interstate highway? Does that mean "This" exit or the "Next" exit after this? And, what about the note on the side of the package: "Don't take this drug, if you are allergic to it." How are you going to know if you are allergic to it, if you don't take it? Recently, I bought some T-shirts that said I could iron them, if I wanted to, but then the next line read "do not iron on decorations." Instructions—confusing, unclear. Surely, Jesus wouldn't do that to us, or would he?

Today, we are continuing our look into what we call the "Lord's Prayer." It's our 6th look into what really should be called the believer's prayer. Remember, the prayer is not for the casual, the passer by. It is what Jesus told his followers they should pray as persons committed to following him. A second thing I want us to remember is this, the prayer is not new: every petition, every thought expressed in it has a reference in the Old Testament. It was a part of the Hebrew Bible Jesus read and studied. What Jesus did, was to collect the parts of the prayer into one place and as one prayer. Jesus was true to his word: he did not come to change God's word, but to fulfill it, to give it deeper meaning, to lay it out for all to see plainly, so we would and could know who God is and what God asks of us.

So, let's turn to God's word in two separate places today. The first is a reading we have considered at least twice since I have been here – Luke 4:1-13, Jesus in the wilderness, led there by the Holy Spirit, and tested there by the devil.

Luke 4

- 1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, was led by the Spirit, into the wilderness,
- 2 where he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days and at the end of them he was hungry.
- 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."
- 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: Man shall not live by bread alone, (but by the very word that comes from the mouth of God)." (Dt. 8:3)
- 5 The devil (then) led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.
- 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.
- 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours."
- 8 Jesus answered. "It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only." (Dt. 6:13)
- 9 The devil (next) led Him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.
- 10 For it is written, he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you carefully
- 11 They will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

- 12 Jesus answered, "It is written, Do not put the Lord your God to the test." (Dt. 6:16)
13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left Jesus until a more opportune time.
The Word Of The Lord!

Jesus was tempted, tested, and he passed. Abraham was tested in Genesis 22 when he was told by God to take Isaac, his son, and sacrifice him to God. He went all the way to the point of sacrifice, when God said, "enough, stop, I know you are my true follower." The whole book of Job is about a test of Job to see if he would denounce God. Everything Job had, including his health and his family was taken from him, but he never wavered. He loved God and he remained faithful.

The Bible teaches that tests and temptations come to every life, and it is oh so true in ours. Accidents happen. Wars happen. Crazy people do crazy things to each other. So, why then does Jesus teach us to pray for something that sounds impossible? Deliver us from being tested or tempted? Let's look at Matthew 6:13, the petition in the Believer's Prayer we are considering this morning:

Matthew 6

13 And lead us not into temptation.

The Word Of The Lord!

That's how we have traditionally translated those words. But, as translated, sound like those confusing instructions we began with this morning—Like the sign on the road that said "Do Not Enter," while under it was a second sign that said, "Enter Here." We have Jesus saying, lead us not into temptation, yet he and everyone else who has ever been has been and will be tested. If you doubt it, wasn't Jesus tested again during Passion week, before Caiaphas and Herod and Pilate? And wasn't Jesus tested, when 5000 hungry people sat before him with only 2 fish and 5 loaves to feed them all?

So, we have to ask, is there a better way to understand what is Jesus really telling believers to pray for?

The petition we are looking at is near the end of the prayer; it provides a part of the climax of the prayer. It says, if we've done everything before this petition, then we must pray that we, like Jesus, can face the tests and temptations, and come through them. If translated so it's understanding is clear the petition means to say"

Deliver us, when we face temptations,

Deliver us that we too might at every step of the way and at the end of the temptation come out stronger in our faith and as God's person.

As we read in Luke 4, Jesus turned to word of God each time the devil tempted him:

When the devil tempted him to feed himself, to use his powers for his personal benefit, Jesus said. The only food he needed was God's spiritual food—God's word.

When the devil offered Jesus power over all, Jesus said it is written that we are to worship God ONLY, Only!

And, when the devil tempted Jesus to test God by throwing himself from a great height, Jesus again went to the Scriptures, And said we are not to test God.

Three areas –doing for ourselves instead of following God, seeking power and the ability to rule over others instead of letting God rule over us, and testing God instead of trusting God.

David was God's man, but tested God with Bathsheba. Abraham was God's man, but pretended Sarah was his sister and not his wife, so Pharaoh wouldn't kill him. Judas tested God by delivering Jesus to the Church's authorities. Israel tested God in the wilderness after their escape from Egypt, clamoring for water and meat. This idea of testing God is not something of ancient history, found only in the anecdotes of Biblical History. It happens here, in our lives, with some of our wrangling. You've heard them: "God, why did you let this happen to me? God, where are you, when life takes a bad twist?" We test God frequently, but Jesus teaches us to pray that we won't.

And, Jesus is telling us when tests come to pray for the ability to discern the good from the evil, to ask that we might have our spiritual skills honed and sharpened so that we too will have a Scriptural answer, each time we are tested. Jesus' prayer is not to never experience the tests of life, but for help to get through them without sacrificing God, without compromising our faith.

Another truth in the petition is that we are not to go out seeking temptations. Goodness knows, enough temptations and tests come into every life anyway without going out looking for them.

So, now that we have it translated correctly, we can now see that this part of the prayer is a prayer that we might be strengthened and enabled to meet the temptations and trials that come, so that we too might emerge like Jesus did from the testing in the wilderness,

ready to continue serving God,
ready to acknowledge our dependence on God and
ready to tell the devil NO, NO, NO, a thousand time, if need be.

Our prayer should be;

And do not let us be overcome by temptations and trials when they come, but let us turn to God and seek a reason to say no from God's word.