

Lead Us Not Into Temptation

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil... - Matthew 6:13

This last petition of our Savior's instructions on how to pray can be construed as slightly enigmatic. Why would we ever assume that God would lead us into temptation? The Bible student recognizes two predominant meanings to the word "temptation" as used throughout Scripture. Temptation is commonly seen and validated as a solicitation to evil, but it can also be synonymous with a trial of faith. James makes it clear doctrinally that God never tempts any man in terms of a solicitation to evil. Those temptations are experienced when we are led away of our own lusts and enticed, and when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, which, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:12-16). Thus, the temptation referenced by Christ in His model prayer refers primarily to trial. Let us meditate upon this petition for our edification.

"Lead us..." We must acknowledge that we are weak beings. Indeed, we are sheep gone astray and turned every one of us to our own way. Only when our ears are opened to hear the Shepherd's voice are we willing to be led. But we also know that our propensity is to wander. We are inclined to lose our way. We must always be in a state of heart and mind that cries out, "Lead us!"

"Lead us not..." There are places we would rather not go, even with Him leading. When we are honest, we do not like pain, and we are not confident in the strength of our faith. We know our fragility, and hope that we are not going to be required to tread a foreboding path. This kind of honesty is necessary when talking to our Creator. He welcomes it.

"Lead us not into temptation..." There are horrible things that we have witnessed others endure. Tremendous trials and struggles that have nothing to do with bad decisions but appear to be (if we did not know any better) the awful outcome of a bad roll of the dice. Decent people often suffer great tragedy and significant loss. Oh, how we pray that we do not have to drink such dregs of the cup of this cursed world!

"But deliver from evil." A contrasting conjunction. The petition seeks not only His leading, but also His deliverance. We dare not assume He will NEVER lead us into trials, for the trial of our faith worketh patience, and patience, experience, and experience, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed. While we ask Him to lead us away from difficult exigencies, we know that there are some tests He will lead us straight through. The decision is His, and our love for Him constrains us to follow. But as we go, our adversary will seek to destroy us in the valley. He is lurking in the details of this examination, and if we are not careful, he could possibly have his way. Oh, Lord, deliver us from his evil designs. May this trying of our faith be to Thy glory and to Satan's demise!

After all, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." Lead us. Deliver us. And be glorified. Amen. -- *D. Murcek*