

## Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil

Mt. 6:13

Greek="Carry us not into temptation"

- Since we know that God does not tempt anyone to evil (cf. James 1:13), the literal meaning of the Greek poses a problem.
- The answer lies in seeing that Semitic languages like Hebrew and Aramaic use the jussive for commands ("let...not...") and this can also be taken as a permissive ("Do not allow us to be carried into temptation").
  - The early Latin writers saw that a similar sense is required.
    - Tertullian (*De oratione* 8), writing c. 200 A.D., comments, "That is, do not allow us so to be led by the one who tempts" (*ne nos patiaris induci ab eo utique qui temptat*). Cf. also *Adv. Marc.* 4.26 (CSEL 47, 509, 27-28=Evans, v. 2, 406,5: *Quis non sinet nos deduci in temptationem?*).
    - Cyprian (*De dominica oratione* 25) and some of the Latin manuscripts known to Augustine (*De dono perseverantiae* 6; PL 45, 1000; compare *De serm. Dom.* 9.30 PL 34, 1282) similarly paraphrase the petition as *ne patiaris nos induci in temptationem*="do not allow us to be led into temptation."
    - A similar interpretation is found in the African Codex Bobbiensis (k), which dates from the fifth or sixth century but is thought to transmit an early form of the Old Latin text (*ne passus fueris induci nos in temptationem*="and do not let yourself allow us to be led into temptation").
  - So also the Greek commentators Dionysius of Alexandria (PG 10, 1601) and Theophylact (on Lk. 11:4) : "Lead us not—that is, do not allow us to fall into temptation."
  - Cf. Origen (*On Prayer*): "Let us therefore pray to be delivered from temptation, not by not being tempted (for this is impossible), but by not being overcome when we are tempted."
- Thus, the prayer asks that when we are tempted, God would not allow us to be carried away by the temptation, but would make it possible for us to resist it (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).
  - Compare Mt. 26:41 (pp Mk. 14:38; Lk. 22:40,46): "Watch and pray in order that you might not enter into temptation"; Lk. 8: 13: "and they fall away in the time of temptation"

The word used here for "temptation" can mean either

- "trial," i.e. hard and painful things one suffers; see e.g.,
  - Lk. 22:28: "But you are those who have remained with me throughout my trials";
  - Acts 20:19: "trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews";
  - Gal. 4:14: "though my condition [a bodily ailment] was a trial to you"
  - 1 Pet. 1:6: "you have been grieved by various trials"
  - Rev. 3:10: "I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world"
  - 1 Pet. 4:12-13 links this suffering (i.e. being insulted and persecuted/suffering civil penalties for being a Christian) with the idea of testing what is true: "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed." This same idea may also be present in
    - 2 Pet. 2:9, where the godly are under pressure and suffer pain while living among the ungodly: "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials"

- Rev. 2:10: “Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil [=accuser] is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life”
  - Sometimes the testing of one’s character is given a positive interpretation
    - See e.g., Jn. 6:6; 2 Cor. 13:5; Heb. 11:17; and especially James 1:2-4: “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing”
    - Testing allows the discernment of what is false in Rev. 2:2: “have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false”; compare also 2 Chron. 32:31: “God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart”
  - Occasionally, particularly in the Old Testament (LXX) or quotations from the Old Testament, used of testing God by acting against him; see e.g. Heb. 3:8-9a (quoting Ps. 95): “do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test.” Compare also Acts 5:9; 15:10
- **temptation**, i.e. being invited (usually by the Devil/Satan; sometimes by unbelieving religious leaders) to see something as good/pleasant and pursue it, when the thing sought is actually evil and leads one to resist and oppose God:
  - 1 Tim. 6:9: “But those who desire to be rich **fall into temptation**, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction”
    - Cf. von Bogatzky on the Lord’s Prayer: “But in this petition we do not pray for an immunity from all temptations, but only that we may not **fall into temptation**; for Christ does not say watch and pray, that we may not be tempted, but that you fall not into temptation. Temptations and incitements, both inward and outward, there will be, whilst we live; for we still wrestle with flesh and blood, the world and Satan” (C.H. von Bogatzky, *Edifying Thoughts on the Paternal Heart of God*, New Ipswich, NH: Pietan Publications, 2006, p. 86)
    - Cf. Dionysius the Great *Exegetical Fragments*: “What difference is there between **being tempted**, and **falling or entering into temptation**? Well, if one is overcome by evil [i.e. agrees to the evil that is proposed]...that man has entered into temptation, and is in it, and is brought under it like one that is captive. But if one withstands and endures, that man is indeed tempted; but he has not entered into the temptation or fallen into it.”
    - Cf. also Ephraim the Syrian’s description of Satan’s unsuccessful temptation of Jesus: “I (Satan) tempted him...with pleasant bread, but He desired it not. To my grief, I strove to learn a psalm, that by His psalm I might take Him as prey. I paused and learned it a second time, but He made my second trial to be vain. I brought Him up to a mountain and showed Him all possessions; I gave them to Him and He was not moved. Better was it for me in the days of Adam, who gave me no great trouble in teaching him.”
  - Gal. 6:1: “lest you too be tempted”
  - 1 Thess. 3:5: “that somehow the tempter had tempted you”
  - Heb. 2:18; 4:15: “For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted...For we do not have a high priest who is unable to

sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin”

- *Vexatio dat intellectum* (Is. 28:19 Vg.: “From trouble comes understanding”):  
When we see that we have been tempted, we have an opportunity to see
  - ✓ who we really are (and how weak we actually are) and
  - ✓ who Jesus really is (and how much we need his strength and his help and the forgiveness and new life he won for us on the Cross)

James 1:13-15: “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then, desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.”

“But **rescue us from the evil [one]**”

Almost all Greek Christian writers understand “the evil” (*tou ponērou*) to mean “the evil one” which makes good sense when the definite article precedes the adjective.

- If “evil” meaning “the evil thing” or “harm” had been intended, it is likely that a different word like *kakia* or *blabē* would have been used instead)

The word used for “evil” is also normally used for the moral evil that comes from the base character of a wicked person and this arises from choice.

- Cf. the comment of Didymus the Blind *Contra Manichaeos*: “For even the name of ‘the evil [one]’ is indicative of choice.”

The one who rescues/delivers is God/Jesus:

- Col. 1:13-14: “He [God the Father] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”
- 1 Thess. 1:10: “Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come”

What we are rescued/delivered from is

- from falling into the powerful temptations proposed to us by the Devil
  - Jn. 17:15: “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one”
  - 2 Thess. 3:3: “But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one”
  - “It is not *your* enemy so much as the enemy of God whom you are called to resist” (Adolph Saphir, *Our Lord’s Pattern of Prayer*, p. 343)
- from corrupt desires displacing and replacing faith
  - We are always by nature combustible material.
    - Cf. Is. 50:11: “Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who equip yourselves with burning torches! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the torches you have kindled! This you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.”
    - “There is the temptation of forgetting that though the Head is in heaven, the feet are on earth. Beware lest you fall into the very sins which you think so much beneath you” (Adolph Saphir, *Our Lord’s Pattern of Prayer*, p. 363)
  - Lk 22:31-32: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.”

- “The devil is also deceptive. He lies about the true nature of sin. ‘You really need this,’ he says. ‘Just this once.’ ‘You can’t help yourself.’ ‘It’s not going to hurt anybody; so who cares?’ ‘You know you’re going to give in eventually; so go ahead and do it now, just to get it over with.’ ‘It will make you feel good.’ With these and a thousand other falsehoods, the tempter goes about his deadly business” (P.G. Rycken. *The Prayer of Our Lord*, Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2002, p. 83).
  - The invitation here is to
    - ✓ *yield,*
    - ✓ *accept* and
    - ✓ *agree.*
  - To fail to resist is to become the Devil’s advocate--to be mastered by the temptation and come under the power of the temptation (Theophylact *Hom* 27).
  - Even to fear the power of the Devil is to put ourselves into a position of dependence passivity and to give to the Devil more power than he deserves or actually has. “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees” (Adolph Saphir, *Our Lord’s Pattern of Prayer*, Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1984, p. 341).
- 1 Cor. 10:13-14: “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore my beloved flee from idolatry.”
  - The first step is to recognize the subtlety of the reasonings being presented to us (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3); this is the first clue that something that is not transparent or straightforward is going on.
  - The second step is to flee occasions for temptation, places where that temptation has an obvious power.
  - The third step is
    - ✓ to confront the temptation precisely as a temptation of the Devil and a real evil and
    - ✓ to quote Scripture against it,
    - ✓ placing one’s hope in the Cross and its power and what Jesus won there—this is the source of our identity and the focus of our hope (see the quotations set for meditation at the end of this handout for more specific teaching on this).
- from the corrupting and destructive power which dominates sinful men
  - “Ah! Lord, Lord save me, deliver me from all my sins and enemies! Ah! Bear me away, drive from me the power of darkness, and at length deliver me from all evil” (C.H. von Bogatzky, *Edifying Thoughts*, p. 100)
  - Compare the prayer of Rabbi Judah in *Berakhot* 16b: “Rabbi [Judah] was accustomed to pray: ‘Let it be your good pleasure to deliver us from impudent men, and impudence; from an evil man, and from an evil chance; from an evil affection, from an evil companion, from an evil neighbor, from Satan the destroyer, from a hard judgment, and from a hard adversary”
  - Compare 2 Tim. 4:18, where Paul speaks of the opposition and slander he suffered from those who opposed the message he preached: “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

### ***For Meditation***

“For a false spirituality, or a spirit of error, does not dislodge the spirit of the world, but only clothes it in a sheep’s skin, giving it a refined name, and putting in its mouth the turgid language of enthusiasm”

--C.H. von Bogatzky, *Edifying Thoughts*, p. 90 n.

“Here was one lady talking about my pretty hair and another, just going out the door and thinking I couldn’t hear, wanting to know who that very pretty girl was. Compliments are at their best when you aren’t meant to hear them and the thrill of pleasure I felt made me realize that I was full of self-love. I’m always read to sympathize with the people who lose their souls—after all, it’s so easy, once you begin to stray along the primrose path of worldliness.”

--Thérèse of Lisieux

“He [sc. Jesus] did not say:

‘You shall not be troubled’

‘You shall not be tempted’

‘You shall not be distressed

But he did say:

‘You shall not be overcome’

--Julian of Norwich

“The greatest of all evil is not to be tempted, because there are then grounds for believing that the devil looks upon us as his property”

--Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney

“No one ought to be confident in his own strength when he undergoes temptation. For whenever we endure evils courageously, our long-suffering comes from Christ.

--Augustine

“Do not flatter yourself that you can hold out against temptation’s power. Secret lusts lie lurking in your own heart which will never give up until they are either destroyed or satisfied. ‘Am I dog, that I should do this thing?’ asks Hazael (2 Kings 8:13). Yes, you will be such a dog, if you are like the king of Syria. Temptation and self-interest will dehumanize you. In theory, we abhor lustful thoughts, but once temptation **enters our heart**, all contrary reasoning are overcome and silenced.”

--John Owen, *Works*, v. 2, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1854/1991, p. 575

“In the moment of temptation have you not sought to deceive yourself by foolish reasonings on the justice of God, and on his mercy? Have you not sought to persuade yourself that sin is not so great an evil—that God is too good to punish you? And is it not true that it was only after the sin that your blindness ceased, and that your eyes were opened to the light?”

--Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*

“When you are tempted by the enemy, the best remedy is to hasten with all speed to the Cross, and to see Christ thereon, covered with wounds, torn, disfigured, streaming with blood. Then reflect that the chief reason why he is there is to destroy sin; and so, with all devotion, beg him not to allow what is so abominable, and what he sought, with such labor, to overthrow, ever to reign in our hearts”

--Peter of Alcántara, *Treatise on Prayer & Meditation*

“The sign of the Cross is the most terrible weapon against the Devil. Thus the Church wishes not only that we should have it continually in front of our minds to recall to us what our souls are worth and what they cost Jesus Christ, but also that we should make it at every juncture ourselves: when we go to bed, when we awaken during the night, when we get up, when we begin any action, and above all, when we are tempted”

--Jean-Marie Baptiste Vianney, *Sermon*

“[When tempted] think then of the love of God, of the Saviour’s constant intercession, of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost,; think of the ministry, unseen, but most certain, of the blessed angels, and the efficacy of prayer, your own and that of your Christian friends, and that of the whole Catholic Church, united in this petition, ‘And lead us not into temptation.’”

--Adolph Saphir, *Our Lord’s Pattern of Prayer*, p. 342