

Do Not Lead Us Into Temptation
Sermon - July 25, 2021

Scripture Readings: James 1:12-18

Golden Verse: “Do not lead us into temptation.” Matthew 6:13

This is the most confusing and most discussed sentence of the Lord’s Prayer.

“Keep us from temptation and rescue us from evil.” I have always found it difficult to understand the part “lead me not into temptation.” As I child, I believed that God may at times lead us into difficulties to try out how strong my faith is. Then I thought, God knows everything. If He knows the strength of my faith, then why does He have to try that? Or, I thought, God wants to show me how weak my faith sometimes can be under temptations, trials, or tribulations. Or, I thought that God wants to show to person A, how strong the faith is of person B, how God can put up with difficulties. in a certain situation, and this is how God wants to make person A’s faith stronger, to endure more. But, in general. I have found it difficult to understand why I should pray that He would not lead me into temptation.

As a child, I always wanted to have a deeper understanding of this part of the prayer: *“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”* (Matthew 6:13)

Then I studied the story of Job, who suffered in the presence of God. He was perfect, and the devil was envious of Job. God allowed Satan to test Job. In my prayers, I always asked God to keep me from such testing, and to keep the devil away from me. Also, I prayed to keep bad influence away from me, so I should be not tempted into following them.

Probably you heard that, in June 2021, Pope Francis suggested that we should change this sentence in the Lord’s Prayer because it is not a good translation. “It is not a good translation because it speaks of a God who induces temptation,” he told Italian TV. “I am the one who falls. It’s not him pushing me into temptation to then see how I have fallen. A father doesn’t do that; a father helps you to get up immediately. It’s Satan who leads us into temptation – that’s his department.”

Based on The New American Standard Bible, the essence of this verse is: . . . ***and do not allow us to enter into a “testing situation,” but rescue us from the evil situations.*** (Matthew 6:13 - NASB)

This way, we understand that, in the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus was not teaching us that we should ask God to purposely motivate us to go into tempted situations, because

as humans, most of the time we would fall. Jesus was urging us to ask God to keep us far away from situations where we might be tempted and we might fall.

We live in God's created world, where next to God's power there is another invisible but real power, Satan, or we used to say, the devil's power. The devil was an angel amongst those angels who served the Lord. But Satan rebelled against God, and for this God forced Satan out from his glory. For this, Satan does everything to separate God from us, from humans.

Why is there the devil? Why has God allowed the devil to come to such a power? Why did God not destroy the devil right after it rebelled? I have to tell you – I don't know. But one day, I believe God will tell me about this in His glory, where the devil will not exist.

The sad situation is that the devil is everywhere, and he has a huge army. The Bible tells us that they are invisible but very powerful: more powerful than I am or you are. But, they are also much less powerful than God.

We have to understand one more extremely important piece of information: Jesus Christ won the victory above the devil. The devil is still around us, but his power is not eternal. When Jesus Christ will come back, that will be the end of the devil's power. But, until then, we live under temptations and we have to put up with challenges or even tribulations.

To understand why Jesus Christ taught us in The Lord's Prayer do not allow us to enter into a "testing situation", let's see where the devil is and what the devil does.

The devil is everywhere. Peter says: *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* (1 Peter 5:7)

The devil has thousands of faces and tempts us, God's children, in many ways. One of his names is TEMPTER. Martin Luther also had many fights with the devil. He said that the devil's temptation was so strong around him that often he even saw the devil. Once when he was tempted, he dropped a bottle of inkwell into the devil, and the marks of it even today are showed to the tourists in the castle of Wartburg.

Today modern people question the existence of the devil or want to deny that the devil exists as an invisible but powerful power. We have to take very seriously that the devil is our biggest enemy. His name is human killer. One of his tactics is to make us believe that he does NOT exist, and in this way, humans will NOT start a

fight against him. If there is no devil, there isn't anything bad, there is no temptation, no sin and we can do whatever we want.

Some try to make fun of the devil, picturing him with little horns and a cute tail. But the devil is more dangerous than we think.

He is everywhere. He is following us as our shadow. He follows us even into the room, where we want to be with the Lord. He follows us even to the church where we want to spend our most sacred time, to take away our attention. He comes always incognito, and we have a very hard time recognizing him.

In paradise, he made a very appealing suggestion to Adam and Eve, saying that if you do what I say, you will be exactly like God. Who does not want to be as powerful as God? He did not say go and steal, but he lied.

If he wants to shake your faith, the devil will show you another Christian's sin, and will create in your heart thoughts like: well, if he or she, as a strong Christian, did this or that, then why should I trust in Christians.

He is selling us products like CONFIDENCE, and we can have a hard time seeing that often behind our confidence is BOASTING. Or JUSTICE, and later we realize that is a lack of sympathy, lack of empathy, and lack of love. Or SAVING, but inside there is GREEDINESS. Or CONSIDERATION, and inside is COWARDICE.

We cannot protect ourselves from temptation like Odysseus tried to protect himself and his sailors. As you know from the legend, Odysseus was sailing next to the island of sirens, and he knew that the sirens would tempt him and his sailors to jump into the ocean to join them. For this, Odysseus filled his sailors' ears with wax so they could not hear their tempting songs and he ordered that he had to be tied up to the main mast of the ship.

We cannot protect ourselves enough from temptation because the devil always can find his way to tempt us. If we shut our ears, he can talk to us through our hearts. No matter how or where we try to hide, the devil will find us. Then, he will talk to us through our hearts, through our desires, instincts, and urges, and start to negotiate with us. When we are quiet, we can hear his voice as loud as our own voice. As a great psychologist, James said: *"Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed."* (James 1:14)

The devil tempts us not only from inside but often from outside, when certain bad things happen to us. Being down, we ask: why did this happen to us? And when we

are down, we can reach the deep point when we are questioning God's love, God's grace, and His constant protection. If something bad happens to us, the inside words of the devil will ask us temptingly: See, you trusted in God, and this happened to you. Or, where was God when this happened to you? Or, if everything goes well around us, the devil would tell us that we don't need God; we have everything we need, so why should we pray, why should we be humble, and why should we praise God?

There are situations when even the air is filled with hate and that can even physically hurt our hearts and minds. Unconsciously, we breathe in all kinds of influences as temptations. The devil's goal is to take us away from God, to redirect our feet from the narrow road which would take us to God's glory, to the broad road which will take us to hell.

We have to realize that Christians are under more attack by the tempter than those who have absolutely no interest to care about God, because, as I said, the devil's goal with you and with me is to take you away from God.

If we are sensitive enough, we constantly can feel any kind of temptations around us. As I used to say, the devil's eyes are red because he never sleeps.

On Maundy Thursday, he tempted even our Lord Jesus by creating some thoughts in Jesus, questioning Jesus if he did not want to die. When the Lord was on the cross, agonizing in pain, the Lord asked loudly crying out: "*My Lord, My Lord, why have You forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46)

The devil is not afraid of you, nor of me, but he is afraid of our Saviour Jesus Christ, because when Christ died on the cross, Jesus won the last war against the devil. When he bled away on the cross, Jesus' blood won the victory. The devil's power was broken, and we were saved. Jesus won not only His own battle but also He won for all of us. And for this, we can receive power from Jesus Christ to win against our temptations. We can receive strength NOT TO DO certain things. We cannot avoid when we are tempted, but we can receive strength to say NO. When we are under temptations, we can ask Him to help us, rescue us, and to talk to us with the words of encouragement.

When we pray, we ask God to fill us with the strength of Christ Jesus, who was able to stand up against all kinds of temptations. We have to ask that His strength should be our strength and His victory should be our victory. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, God tells us that we can have victory over every sin that comes our way!

Our faithful God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to resist, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it -1 Corinthians 10:13 (NASB).

What is the way of escape? The answer is we need to submit to the Holy Spirit. Listen to Paul who said: *“But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit.”* (Galatians 5:16-17)

If we walk by the Spirit, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh and we will be sinning less. The Lord wants to rescue us from evil and wants to help us to walk in the Spirit! Let it be. Amen.