

## PASSING THE TEST

Tuesday, March 3

Reading: James 1:1-18

**James 1:12** *Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

The line “lead us not into temptation” used to confuse me. Why would Jesus ask us to pray this when the book of James tells us: “When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone” (James 1:13). Why prayer for God not to lead us into temptation when that is clearly something He will never do!

First, we need to look at the word “temptation.” The Greek word is *peirasmós* and it has several shades of meaning. It can mean to tempt or it can mean to test or prove. In the James passage mentioned above, the author uses this word in both ways. He uses it first in describing the trials of life that grow our faith (1:2-4, 12). He then uses the same word to describe the temptation to do evil, that God will never do (1:13-15). We must look at the context to determine which shade of meaning is meant by the author.

This multiple meaning for words should not surprise us as we do it all the time in English as well. Consider the following sentences shared by David Jeremiah:

I bagged the squirrel right over there, pal. I put him in that bag on picnic table. I sure hope Martha isn't upset with me – the old bag. I can see the puffy red bags under her eyes already. But I suppose it's too late to hide – the cat's already out of the bag.<sup>1</sup>

Did you follow the train of thought? The word “bag” was used 5 times in 5 different ways but you understood by knowing the context. Likewise, the context where we find the word *peirasmós* will help us understand whether it is talking about a test or a temptation.

So in the Lord's Prayer, which meaning is meant? Since God will never tempt His children to sin, Jesus must be leaning toward the test or trial meaning of the word. He is telling us to pray for God's protection from trials that may lead us away from Him or tempt us to sin.

Does God lead us into situations that will test our faith? Yes, He does! After Jesus' baptism, Matthew records that “Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (Mathew 4:1). James says we should “count it pure joy” when we face trials because they help us grow a mature faith” (James 1:2-4).

God does lead us into times of trial to test our faith. And like any test, there are two possible outcomes – we PASS or we FAIL. We fail when we forget to let God lead us and instead lean on our own understanding. This makes us too weak to resist Satan's temptations. We pass when we rely on the Holy Spirit's power and approach the test in the right way and according to God's will and way.

How can you make a prayer for God's leading a regular part of your prayer life?  
What trials have you faced? What was the outcome? Why?

<sup>1</sup> David Jeremiah. Prayer: The Great Adventure, p. 155