

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

We have been taught to pray:

Matthew 6:13a *"and lead us not into temptation" [KJV]*

One may be tempted to wonder: what kind of God is He, Whom we should entreat that He not cause us to sin? Would a loving Father put us in a condition to be tempted to sin, unless we plead with Him not to do it?

First of all, we should be clear that God does not tempt anyone:

James 1:13 *No one who is being tempted should say, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself tempts no one. [LEB]*

Why then ask Him not to do something that He will never do anyway?

To begin: the Greek term *πειρασμός* and its derivatives are often translated as "temptation" and at other times as "trial" or "test."

God — in His wisdom and love — has a role for the tempter and for temptations and trials in His plan for us and the world. There is no question that we may not fully understand God's plans, or His wisdom, or His ways, because He said:

Isaiah 55:9 *For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. [NRSV]*

We do know this: Eve and Adam faced temptation and failed; Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted and conquered [**Matthew 4:1 & ff**].

As for us, we are taught to consider ourselves blessed by trials and temptations and by the opportunity to endure and resist temptation.

James 1:12 *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. [NKJV]*

Or in an alternate rendering:

James 1:12 *Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. [NASB]*

Again:

1 Peter 1:6–7 *So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while.*

⁷These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. [NLT]

When God lets the tempter try us, we do rest assured that not only a great blessing awaits us but also that God provides the resources to withstand:

1 Corinthians 10:13 *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. [ESV]*

So, should we ask not to be led into temptations and trials, which — we are assured — would result in receiving "the crown of life"?

Yes and Jesus Himself, in Gethsemane, prayed:

Mark 14:36a *And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me. [KJV]*

Although a short while earlier, He had noted:

John 18:11b *"Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" [NRSV]*

Isn't this intellectually inconsistent and illogical?

Yes, intellectually, it is clearly inconsistent and illogical: spiritually it is the encouragement given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ — both by instruction (in the "Lord's prayer") and by example (in His Gethsemane prayer).

It is in fact an instance of how:

2 Corinthians 10:5 *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. [ESV]*

So, we know that we may be led to a place of temptation and trial so that — through it — we may be strengthened.

Yet, we may still be fearful of the suffering and the hardship and therefore, we pray that we be spared — as Jesus did.

The spiritual encouragement is to have enough confidence, trust and faith in our Father, the Living God, that, when we pray, we do open our hearts with sincerity to Him and speak honestly — without feigning a perfection we have not yet attained — of our hopes and fears of temptations and trials, that we tell Him of our desires and concerns, for He knows them all and wants to hear and touch

our hearts, because He knows — as we do — that at the beginning of our prayer we had said:

Matthew 6:10b *"..... Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."* [KJV]

We do wish and plead that we be spared temptations and sufferings. Nevertheless, our first priority in our prayers and in our hearts is His will: for we know — by faith — that His will yields the most good for us, whether through blessings or through trials.

What kind of God is He? Such is the kind of loving God the Almighty and All-knowing Living God is.