

Should the Pope Change the Lord's Prayer?

("And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil")

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The pope has officially changed the Lord's Prayer that He gave to His disciples from "lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13) to "do not let us fall into temptation." The pope then said, "A father does not lead into temptation, a father helps you to get up immediately." The pope's rationale for changing this part of the prayer is because he believes the original line portrays God in a false light since Satan is the one who leads us astray (Gen. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:8). The pope said, "The one who leads you into temptation is Satan." "That's Satan's role." However, we must let the Word of God speak for itself and not allow the pope to speak in the place of the Word of God. The Bible states that "thy word is truth" (John 17:17) and not what the pope says about it. Popes have notoriously spoke ex-cathedra throughout the years while true Christianity has always embraced God's Word as the final revelation of truth to mankind. We must continually ask, "What saith the scripture?" (Rom. 4:3) and not "What saith the pope?"

The Greek word (eisphero) behind the word "lead" means to "bring into" or "lead into." All of the lexical evidence suggests the word does mean to "carry in or bring into" the place of temptation. This phrase is accurately translated and to change it would mean that one is changing the Word of God. Just because one misunderstands something in the Bible does not mean that it must be changed! The problem with the pope is that he misunderstands the sovereignty of God over the realm of temptation. This is what the phrase is teaching when it accurately states "and lead us not into temptation."

The idea of praying to the Father, so He might not "lead us into temptation" (the enticement to sin – to do wrong) has been misunderstood by many over the years – including the pope. Of course, God's impeccable holiness and goodness will not allow Him to lead anyone into temptation. God cannot tempt others to actually harbor bitterness and an unforgiving spirit in their hearts as Jesus previously outlined in this prayer.

James 1:13 says:

“Let no man say that when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.”

God is absolutely holy and pure and cannot associate Himself with tempting others to actually sin. This being the case, we can be sure that “lead us not into temptation” is not conveying the idea that God is the one tempting us. The phrase “lead us not into temptation” does not mean that God Himself is the Tempter but that He *allows* us to be tempted by the Devil according to His sovereign plan and purpose within a fallen world. This is the idea and sense behind “lead us not into temptation.” God in His sovereignty and providence is in control over all the temptations that we pass through in life. We must acknowledge this in our prayer time.

In essence, here is the Bible teaching of this prayer: **And lead us** (GOD’S DIRECTION = *the providence of God allowing, controlling, directing, and orchestrating the timing, strength, length, and place of temptation*) **not into temptation, but deliver us from evil** (OUR DESIRE = *the passion to escape and be victorious over all temptation to sin which ultimately is allowed by the Father to demonstrate our loyalty and love for Him*). Here is what Jesus is teaching us. When we pray, we are to acknowledge God’s “leading” or sovereign direction over our temptation (His permission and control over our time of temptation) while at the same time we should possess the wholesome desire to escape temptation or be prepared to face it, so that we might not sin against God but live victoriously. The idea of “lead us not” would bring this concept or idea into focus. The disciple of Christ, acknowledging God’s sovereign leading and direction over all temptation, should have the all-consuming desire to escape it and not be overcome by it. Our request to the sovereign God who is in control of our temptation should be to escape it entirely, or be victorious through it, and live above it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 brings out the idea of God’s leading and direction over our time of temptation: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man (*common trials*): but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able (*controlled pressures*); but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (*conquering grace*). This reminds us that God is sovereign (in control) over our time of temptation. He *allows* temptation to

come into our lives according to His purpose and will. Remember also that He keeps His hand on the thermostat when it comes to our temptations – only allowing the devil to go so far. He promises that we will never get more than we can bear. Certainly we see this in the case with Job. Satan was limited in the type of calamities that he could bring against him which were designed to get Job to turn against God.

Job 1:12

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.”

Job 2:4-6

“And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life.”

Luke 22:31-33 is similar in nature:

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

God does not actually tempt us to sin but He does lead us to the place of temptation, according to His sovereign purpose, and then says, “I will allow you to pass through this time, be with you through it, and keep my limitations upon it.” Yes, our God is a very loving, gracious, and merciful God!

Matthew 4:1 gives us a similar idea of God directing in the time of our temptation which is found in the example of Jesus’ life. “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” We see God’s sovereignty or control over the time of the temptation of Christ. The Holy Spirit led, directed, and orchestrated the time of Jesus’ temptation. The Holy Spirit was not the Tempter but He was the orchestrator of this time of temptation, allowing it to occur in order to fulfill the sovereign purpose of the heavenly Father. What was true in Jesus’ time of temptation is also true in our own temptation. God leads and directs in the time of

temptation by allowing it, putting limits on it, and promising that He will be with us through it. He orchestrates everything and in doing so we can claim the promise of Romans 8:28 which states that “all things work together for good” for God’s children.

The account of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness may appear to be in conflict with what Jesus taught His disciples. The Bible says, “Jesus (was) led up of the Spirit ... to be tempted of the devil” but in Matthew 6:13 they were to pray “Lead us not into temptation.” This may sound like a discrepancy but this is not the case because we are looking at temptation from two different perspectives. In both Matthew 4:1 and 6:13 we see God’s SOVEREIGNTY over temptation (permitting and controlling it) but in Matthew 6:13 we also see the DESIRE we are to have to be victorious over it, by either avoiding it completely or passing through it unscathed.

The prayer “lead us not into temptation” acknowledges that God is in control of our temptation from start to finish and it reveals our desire that we should possess to avoid it at all cost. When facing temptation, we should want to pass through it victoriously because we are prepared for it, prayed up, and living close to God. The understanding of this phrase “And lead us not into temptation” means that the heart’s desire and inclination of every believer should be to avoid the danger and trouble that sin creates in our lives.

John Constable conveys it like this:

“Even though God is not the instrumental cause of our testing He does permit us to experience temptation from the world, the flesh, and the devil (cf. 4:1). Therefore this petition is a request that He minimize the occasions of our testing that may result in our sinning. It articulates the repentant disciple’s felt weakness to stand up under severe trials in view of our sinfulness.”

Earl Radmacher adds:

“Do not lead us into temptation is a plea for the providential help of God in our daily confrontation with the temptation of sin.”

The pope says we should change the Lord’s prayer to “keep us from falling into sin.” Of course, this should be the desire of every true Christian follower of Christ.

However, it is ludicrous to change God's Word, since the only way we can possess this wholesome desire to escape sin is to acknowledge that God is the One Who providentially "leads" and is in control over the time of our temptation. If God were not ordaining and orchestrating our time of temptation, God's children would be overridden by Satan's power and evil plan to destroy us (Rom. 8:36).

When one prays, "lead us not into temptation" he is basically saying, "I despise and fear sin so much, that if God in His sovereignty chooses to do so, I want to escape all prospects of falling into it, by completely avoiding the temptation that leads to sin, rather than having to face temptation and possibly suffering defeat. And if God in His sovereignty allows temptation to come into my life, I do not want to be caught off guard, but be spiritually prepared to face it and pass through it victoriously."

Rod Mattoon explains it well:

"The idea here is, 'Lord, preserve me from temptation that will bring me under its sway and will cause me to fall.' It is the expression of the redeemed soul that so despises and fears sin that it wants to escape all prospects of falling into it, choosing to avoid temptation rather than having to defeat temptation ... This petition in Matthew 6:13, is also a safeguard against presumption and a false sense of security and self-sufficiency. We know that we will never have arrived spiritually, and that we will never be free of the danger of sin, until we are with the Lord."

Martin Luther said:

"We cannot help being exposed to the assaults, but we pray that we may not fall and perish under them."

The final eruption of Mount St. Helens in May of 1980 was not a sudden event. For two months prior to the massive blast—the most deadly and destructive in American history. Earthquakes and volcanic activity signaled a major event was underway. Authorities had plenty of time to sound the alarm and warn those living nearby of the looming danger. Yet despite the seriousness of the threat, some people chose to disregard the warnings.

Probably the best known of those who refused to evacuate was Harry Randall Truman. The eighty-three-year-old man was the owner and caretaker at the Mount

St. Helens Lodge at Spirit Lake. He had survived the sinking of his troop ship by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland during World War I, and he was not about to leave just because scientists thought there was danger. Truman told reporters, "I don't have any idea whether it will blow. But I don't believe it to the point that I'm going to pack up." On May 18, 1980, Truman and his lodge were buried beneath 150 feet of mud and debris from the volcanic eruption. His body was never found.

Here is the point. It is foolish to recognize danger or temptation and think that we will somehow be exempt from the consequences if we linger. If we believe the Scriptures warnings concerning temptation, we will surely want to avoid it and flee. "Flee youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22). The only real protection that we have is the approach taken by Joseph when he was tempted by Potiphar's wife. "...and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (Genesis 39:12). In one sense, we should want to avoid temptation at all cost and when we are tempted, we should want to pass through temptation victoriously. This is what Jesus is referring to when He tells his disciples to pray, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

In summary, this phrase is a prayer that has several requests in mind. First, by acknowledging God's control over the time of temptation, it's praying with the intense desire to avoid temptation altogether. "Father, I acknowledge Your leading and oversight over all temptation, if it's within your plan, please do not allow me to face this particular temptation today. Deliver me from evil." Wouldn't it be great to avoid certain temptations? We can pray surrendered to the Father's sovereign will ("lead us not into temptation") and ask for deliverance from the temptation itself ("deliver us from evil"), that we might not face it and therefore go on victory.

Second, by acknowledging God's control over the time of temptation, this is also a prayer that possesses an intense desire to pass through temptation victoriously. "Father, in acknowledging Your leading and oversight over all temptation, allow me to be ready when it comes, so that I am never caught off guard and overcome by it, and so I can pass through this specific temptation victoriously. Deliver me from evil."

In essence, our desire should be that God would providentially lead us to escape and be victorious over all temptation by His divine intervention and power. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” is a prayer that essentially says: “Heavenly Father, my desire is to escape Satan’s temptation by avoiding it or by passing through it unscathed.” It is a prayer that asks, “Dear God, if by Your providential leading and direction, I can avoid being tempted, I would be grateful, but if You give permission for me to be tempted, then I don’t want to pass through the temptation unprepared but ready to face it and get through it victoriously. I surrender or bow my knee to your sovereignty, and ask that in your providential direction and leading over my time of temptation, I might be delivered from all evil, that I might escape the temptation or pass through it victoriously.”

This is basically a healthy desire to not participate with temptation, sin, and failure in any way. This is a Christian who wants nothing to do with sin, if possible, even the temptation that leads to sin. But if God allows it, we are to pray that He would help us to remain spiritual alert, so we can pass through temptation victoriously as we face the evil and sin of Satan’s temptation.

2 Peter 2:9 says:

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”

The Lord who is in control of all temptation and trials certainly knows how to take us through them victoriously, as He did for Noah and his family (2 Pet. 2:5) and also Lot (2 Pet. 2:7-8). Lot, in contrast to the totally wicked population of the cities, was evidently a righteous man and he was also delivered from the destruction of the twin cities by God’s divine intervention. In a similar way, God certainly knows how to deliver His people from the temptations and trials which seek to overcome our spiritual lives. We must trust in His power and provision and pass through the temptations victoriously that we face on a daily basis.

F. B. Meyer once said:

“Temptation may even be a blessing to a man when it reveals to him his weakness and drives him to the almighty Savior. ...With every temptation there will be a way of escape.”

Frederick Faber adds:

“Every moment of resistance to temptation is a victory!”

In summary, there is no reason to change the phrase “lead us not into temptation” to “do not let us fall into temptation.” In rewording it, we not only change God’s Word but dismiss the providential hand of God behind the time of our temptation. This false rendering of the phrase takes temptation outside the realm of God’s sovereign purpose for our lives and makes the Devil sovereign over it. It makes the Devil lord over God and allows the Evil One to usurp the authority of God over the realm of temptation. For this reason, we must maintain the phrase, “And lead us not into temptation” and not abandon the teaching of God’s sovereignty over the time of temptation. We should deny all papal authority to reinterpret God’s holy Word!

So, this is how we should understand Christ’s words, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” This sentence is an appeal to the providence of God, His sovereign leading and direction over temptation, a request that God might deliver us from temptation, either by escaping it altogether or passing through it victoriously. To lead us not into temptation is acknowledging God’s sovereignty over all temptation (when it comes, how hard it comes, where it comes) and is a request that we escape it, or that we enter it being prepared and ready to win! So the believer can pray to be kept from overwhelming solicitation to sin. We should learn to pray in this manner as Jesus taught His disciples. It is a healthy way to prayer which can lead to victory and blessing in our personal lives.

We need to remember Jesus’ example, how He reacted to the greatest trial of His life, and follow His example. Matthew 26:39 records: “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

As Jesus contemplates Calvary’s cross, He willingly surrendered to the Father’s sovereign plan regarding the great trial of the cross, mainly, being separated from the Father. In a similar way, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is teaching that His disciples should surrender to the Father’s overall leading and direction regarding

their temptation. They should appeal to the sovereign Father: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” In other words, they should request that they might be delivered from the time of evil temptation, either completely delivered FROM it, or delivered THROUGH it in accordance with His sovereign plan and purpose. Their desire should be for God to allow them to escape temptation and be victorious over all temptation through His direction and divine intervention in their lives. Or as the hymn writer said:

“Yield not to temptations for yielding is sin;
Each vict’ry will help you some other to win;
Fight manfully onward, dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus—He’ll carry you through.
Ask the Savior to help you, comfort, strengthen and keep you;
He is willing to aid you—He will carry you through.”

In praying “lead us not into temptation” one realizes God’s sovereignty over every temptation that we face and it expresses our resolve to be victorious over temptation, by wanting to escape the time of temptation, or not to be in a weakened position and caught off guard spiritually when entering the temptation. The phrase “deliver us from evil” connotes the desire to avoid it or pass through it victoriously. It would mean to experience deliverance from the power of Satan’s temptations as we face them in life.

This is primarily a prayer for protection and victory in what the Bible calls elsewhere “the evil day” (the time of temptation – Eph. 6:13). Temptation will come! So once again, our prayer is simple: “**And lead us (GOD’S DIRECTION = *the providence of God allowing, controlling, directing, and orchestrating the timing, strength, length, and place of temptation*) not into temptation, but deliver us from evil**” (OUR DESIRE = *the passion to escape and be victorious over all temptation to sin which ultimately is allowed by the Father to demonstrate our loyalty and love for Him*).

Jesus taught in Matthew 26:41:

“**Watch and pray, (stay spiritually alert) that ye enter not into temptation (that we become weakened spiritually and set ourselves up for temptation and are overcome by it): the spirit indeed is willing (our volitional strength or will to do what is right**

is often strong because of the new nature that resides in the realm of one's spirit), but the flesh is weak" (the flesh speaks of our own physical or human weakness which tries to live victorious without God's assistance).

We often want to do the right thing but find that we need supernatural assistance to accomplish it. Paul experienced this very thing in Romans 7:15–25. This phrase (“that ye enter not into temptation” – Matt. 26:41) is expressing the similar idea that Jesus taught when He said, “Lead us not in to temptation.” We are to recognize God’s providence over all temptation and want to be victorious over temptation. This means we must stay spiritually alert (“watch and pray”), so that we might not “enter” the time of temptation off guard and in a weakened position from a spiritual standpoint. Recognizing God’s providence over all of our temptation allows us to pray in this way. We remain vigilant and pray for deliverance from temptation, sometimes escaping it altogether, but many times being spiritually prepared to face it and pass through it victoriously.

When we are spiritually weak and unprepared, we are open game for Satan’s tactics and temptations (Eph. 6:11). Satan comes in our time of weakness and we find ourselves being tempted, but we are not spiritually prepared to face it through prayer and dependence upon God, and as a result we are going to suffer defeat instead of victory. In essence, we are to stay spiritually alert by praying and keeping ourselves close to God and dependent upon Him for His grace and strength (2 Cor. 12:9), so that when the time of temptation does come, we might not enter the period of temptation in a state of spiritual weakness and unexpectancy, but as a victor ready to win the battle! We need to be in a state of prayer and dependency upon God for His power, strength, and victory so that when temptation does come, we can say, “No, I will not succumb to this temptation.”

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Although God himself never tempts us to sin, He does *allow* temptation to come into our lives, sometimes through many difficult and discouraging circumstances. But all of these discouraging circumstances, along with their accompanying temptations, can become the very instruments that God uses to strengthen us, to build us up, and to give us victory. Again, we must bow our knee to God’s sovereign working in our lives, even when it comes to temptation. We must say as the hymnist said:

“What tho' the way be lonely
And dark the shadows fall,
I know where'er it leadeth
My Father planned it all.

The sun may shine tomorrow
The shadows break and flee,
'Twill be the way He chooses
My Father's plan for me.

I sing through shade and sunshine
I trust what e'er befall,
I sing, I can't be silent
My Father planned it all.”

This is what the phrase “and lead us not into temptation” means. God is the leader or controller of it. Since this is true, we can pray for escape and victory (“but deliver us from evil”). The important thing is that we “watch and pray” and be ready to face temptation for the temptations of Satan and his emissaries are very real. They can come in subtle forms (Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:4) but others times they come like a steamroller seeking to crush and devour our lives (1 Peter. 5:8).

“Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole.”

Application Questions:

- Have you been surrendered to the sovereignty of God over your life, even when it comes to being tempted and passing through trials?
- Are you willing to accept to His purpose for your life even when it involves some specific temptation?

- Do you acknowledge this in your prayer life during the time of temptation and testing?
- Are you worshipping the great God of wonders and the sovereign God of Heaven (Rom. 11:33) during your prayer time?
- Are you ascribing praise and thanksgiving to Him for His providential workings in the world and in your own personal life in spite of the difficulty of the trials and temptations you are presently facing?
- Do you need to once again open your heart to His providence and purpose over your life which ultimately involves conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:28-29)?
- Are you ready to pray, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” since God is on the throne and everything you face ultimately comes from the hand of the Lord?
- Do you possess and earnest desire to be delivered from temptation and not be overcome by it?
- Are you spiritually alert, praying, and ready to face the enemy of your soul?