

The prayer Jesus taught us

Lesson 8 - Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

1 Introduction

This petition is often split in two, though Calvin states, "This is wrong: for the nature of the subject makes it manifest, that it is one and the same petition." In fact, Augustine would argue that the conjunction holding these two clauses together should be removed entirely. [...]

Luther insists it is not possible for humanity to avoid temptation as long as we are living in the flesh. He interprets this petition as, "merely a request to God to give us strength and power to persist in the face of great, grievous perils and temptations which every Christian must bear, even if they come one by one." Augustine takes another approach, drawing a distinction between *being tempted* and being *brought into temptation*. "All men must be tempted; but to be brought into temptation is to be brought into the power and the control of temptation; it is to be not only subjected to temptation but to be subdued by temptation."

Mr. Storage's Closet, *A Brief Exegetical Study of the Lord's Prayer*

We may say in summary so far, the petition for bread was a prayer for the present ("give us this day"), the petition for forgiveness was a prayer for the removal of a bad past, and now the prayer for leading is a prayer for a good future.

This petition flows naturally from the preceding prayer for forgiveness. For when we ask for forgiveness we almost instinctively ask also to be kept from the temptations and evil that made our prayer for forgiveness necessary at all.

Frederik Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1 The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Eerdmans 1987) p. 312-314.

2 What is temptation?

Discussion of temptation of the covenant worshipper is significant. The area of temptation for the petitioner involves two aspects. The two aspects are internal temptations and external temptations.

The citizen of the kingdom comes seeking help, from their own sinful nature that is against the Spirit and from the external forces of the world and the Tempter himself. The Scripture refers to the internal temptation as the "sin that dwells within".

This is the what the Apostle wrestles with as they grow in their Sanctification, they will realize they are wrestling with this sinful nature till the Eschaton where they will be perfected. It is with these types of temptations men will discover if they are going to fight against the Spirit or be conformed to the image of their Royal Mediator.

Exegesis of The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6/9-13 « Nil Nisi Verum

Life is not easy. It is a daily battle. Trials like sickness and failure can crush our spirits. False values and easy promises can entice us and even destroy our souls. And so we ask God to keep us from failing when we are tested, to help us to know the right thing to do, to deliver us from the evil which awaits us in life.

Victor Hoagland, C.P., *The Prayer Jesus Taught Us*

The picture at the beginning of this Petition is of a people walking through something like a minefield; we pray that we will not be led into a mine of overwhelming temptation. [...] To come into something is to enter its sphere and so come under its influence.

Frederik Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1 The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Eerdmans 1987) p. 312-314.

The "Hands of Massah"

Massah comes from a root that means to melt, dissolve, or consume -- as by fire that tests the quality of something. As a noun, the word is often translated as "test," "trial," or "temptation," and is directly used to name the place where the children of Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness ([Ex 17:7](#); [Deut 6:16](#), [Psalm 95:8](#); [Hebrews 3:7-9](#)). Significantly, *massah* can also mean "despair," in the sense of "melting of heart," and is usually rendered as mockery or scorn ([Job 9:23](#)).

When we petition the Father to be "led not into temptation," we are essentially asking to be redirected in our heart's attitude in the face of difficult and trying moments. To fall into the "hands of Massah" means yielding to despair -- and to the psychological dissolution that results in bitterness, scorn, and mockery.

The Lord's Prayer in Hebrew - Part 5

Life is always under attack from temptation, but no enemy can launch an invasion until he finds a bridgehead. Where then does temptation find its bridgehead? Where do our temptations come from? To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and, if we know whence the attack is likely to come, we will have a better chance to overcome it.

(i) Sometimes the attack of temptation comes from outside us. There are people whose influence is bad. There are people in whose company it would be very difficult even to suggest doing a dishonourable thing, and there are people in whose company it is easy to do the wrong things. When Robert Burns was a young man he went to Irvine to learn flax-dressing. There he fell in with a certain Robert Brown, who was a man who had seen much of the world, and who had a fascinating and a dominating personality. Burns tells us that he admired him and strove to imitate him. Burns goes on: "He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself when Woman was the guiding star.... He spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with horror.... Here his friendship did me a mischief." There are friendships and associations which can do us a mischief. In a tempting world a man should be very

careful in his choice of friends and of the society in which he will move. He should give the temptations which come from outside as little chance as possible.

(ii) It is one of the tragic facts of life that temptations can come to us from those who love us; and of all kinds of temptation this is the hardest to fight. It comes from people who love us and who have not the slightest intention of harming us.

[...] That was what happened to Jesus. "A man's foes," said Jesus, "will be those of his own household" ([Matthew 10:36](#)). They came and they tried to take him home, because they said that he was mad ([Mark 3:21](#)). To them he seemed to be throwing his life and his career away; to them he seemed to be making a fool of himself; and they tried to stop him. Sometimes the bitterest of all temptations come to us from the voice of love.

(iii) There is one very odd way in which temptation can come, especially to younger people. There is in most of us a queer streak, which, at least in certain company, makes us wish to appear worse than we are. We do not wish to appear soft and pious, namby-pamby and holy. We would rather be thought daredevil, swashbuckling adventurers, men of the world and not innocents. Augustine has a famous passage in his confessions: "Among my equals I was ashamed of being less shameless than others, when I heard them boast of their wickedness.... And I took pleasure not only in the pleasure of the deed but in the praise.... I made myself worse than I was, that I might not be reproached, and when in anything I had not sinned as the most abandoned ones, I would say that I had done what I had not done, that I might not seem contemptible." Many a man has begun on some indulgence, or introduced himself to some habit, because he did not wish to appear less experienced in worldliness than the company in which he happened to be. One of the great defences against temptation is simply the courage to be good.

(iv) But temptation comes not only from outside us; it comes from inside us too. If there was nothing in us to which temptation could appeal then it would be helpless to defeat us. In every one of us there is some weak spot; and at that weak spot temptation launches its attack.

The point of vulnerability differs in all of us. What is a violent temptation to one man, leaves another man quite unmoved; and what leaves one man quite unmoved may be an irresistible temptation to another.[...]

In every man there is the weak spot, which, if he is not on the watch, can ruin him. Somewhere in every man there is the flaw, some fault of temperament which can ruin life, some instinct or passion so strong that it may at any time snap the leash, some quirk in our make-up that makes what is a pleasure to someone else a menace to us. We should realize it, and be on the watch.

(v) But, strangely enough, temptation comes sometimes not from our weakest point, but from our strongest point. If there is one thing of which we are in the habit of saying. "That is one thing anyway which I would never do," it is just there that we should be

upon the watch. History is full of the stories of castles which were taken just at the point where the defenders thought them so strong that no guard was necessary. Nothing gives temptation its chance like over-confidence. At our weakest and at our strongest points we must be upon the watch.

William Barclay, *the Gospel of Matthew*, pp.

3 'Lead us not into...'

Christ added that we should pray not only that our sins be forgiven but also that we should completely shun them. "Lead us not into temptation", that is, do not allow us to be led by the tempter. God forbid that our Lord should seem to be the tempter, as if he were not aware of one's faith or were eager to upset it! That weakness and spitefulness belongs to the devil. Even in the case of Abraham, God ordered the sacrifice of his son not to tempt his faith but to prove it. He did this to set an example for his commandment that he was later to teach that no one should hold his loved ones dearer than God. Christ himself was tempted by the devil and pointed out the subtle director of the temptation. He confirms this passage by his words to his apostles later when he says, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation. (luke 22:46)

Tertullian, *On Prayer*, 8:1-3

The observation however is "How is it that God is being pleaded not to cause the temptation?" How is this reconciled with Scripture which tells us "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."?

There are accounts of God speaking of the testing of those who love Him. He tested Abraham and Jesus.

The testing God does is to bring men closer to Him or to allow them to fall to the enemy. Praying for protection from the worshipper's own sin is a statement of the hatred of sin and a pledge of allegiance to the King.

The prayer for the Sovereign King not to lead into temptation is an admission of weaknesses and the necessity of divine intervention on a cosmic scale. That man would not be subjected to the justice of God, nor temptation beyond what he can bare, but would receive mercy.

He entrusts himself to his sovereign Lord who has promised not to break a bruised reed.

Exegesis of The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6/9-13 « Nil Nisi Verum

"And lead us not into temptation"

Interpretations of the penultimate petition of the prayer—not to be led by God into peirasmos—vary considerably. [The] Greek word "πειρασμός" (peirasmos) [...] can mean temptation, testing, trial, experiment. Although the traditional English translation uses the word "temptation" and Carl Jung saw God as actually leading people astray, Christians generally interpret the petition as not contradicting James 1:13–14: "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." Some see the petition as an eschatological appeal against unfavourable Last Judgment, a theory supported by the use of the word "peirasmos" in this sense in Revelation 3:10. Others see it as a plea against hard tests described elsewhere in scripture, such as those of Job. It is also read as: "Do not let us be led (by ourselves, by others, by Satan) into temptations". Since it follows shortly after a plea for daily bread (i.e., material sustenance), it is also seen as referring to not being caught up in the material pleasures given. A similar phrase appears in Matthew 26:41 and Luke 22:40 in connection with the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane.

Lord's Prayer - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

To tempt means to test, to try; hence temptation means test or trial.

Sometimes it is humanity that tests God, like the Israelites in the desert (Dt 8,2). It means to defy God, refusing to show Him faith and obedience, opposing His plan of salvation.

Sometimes it is God who tests humanity, as when He tested Abraham in sacrificing his only son (Gen 22,1f). It means to say that God, wanting to realize His plan for salvation, puts before humanity the decision to believe or not to believe in Him, to obey or disobey Him.

Sometimes it is the devil, Satan, who tests humanity by trying to obstruct the divine plan of salvation, seeking to push humanity towards disbelief and disobedience (Mt 4,1-11).

Temptation in this sense comes not from God but from the devil. But it is attributed to God in the Semitic sense of the concept, God being the ultimate cause of everything (cf the Prologue of Job). It speaks of the temptations of everyday life, an image and precursor of the temptation of the last days, of 'the trial which is to come for the whole world'(Rev 3,10). This 'great tribulation' (Mt 24,21) is the final decisive attack which Satan launches against the faithful, attacking with such violence that, as Jesus says 'if those days were not shorten, nothing living would be saved, but because of the elect, those days will be shortened' (Mt 22,22) so that there may be faith on earth (cf Lk 18,8). Christians pray to the heavenly Father that He may preserve them not only from temptation but also from falling into temptation. Agreeing with this thought is the teaching found in 1Cor 10,13:

'God is faithful, and He will not permit that you be tempted beyond your strength; but with the temptation that comes, He will give you a way out and the strength to bear it'. This is valid for the temptations of daily life, but it is valid above all for the great temptation of the last days.

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

There are two matters of meaning at which we must look before we begin to study this petition in detail.

(i) To modern ears the word tempt is always a bad word; it always means to seek to seduce into evil. But in the Bible the verb *peirazein* is often better translated by the word *test* than by the word *tempt*. In its New Testament usage to tempt a person is not so much to seek to seduce him into sin, as it is to test his strength and his loyalty and his ability for service.

In the Old Testament we read the story of how God tested the loyalty of Abraham by seeming to demand the sacrifice of his only son Isaac. In the King James Version the story begins: "And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham" ([Genesis 22:1](#)).

Obviously the word tempt cannot there mean to seek to seduce into sin, for that is something that God would never do. It means rather to submit to a test of loyalty and obedience. When we read the story of the temptations of Jesus, it begins: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" ([Matthew 4:1](#)). If we take the word tempt there in the sense of to seduce into sin, it makes the Holy Spirit a partner in an attempt to compel Jesus to sin. Time and again in the Bible we will find that the word tempt has the idea of testing in it, at least as much as the idea of seeking to lead into sin.

Here, then, is one of the great and precious truths about temptation. Temptation is not designed to make us fall. Temptation is designed to make us stronger and better men and women. Temptation is not designed to make us sinners. It is designed to make us good. We may fail in the test, but we are not meant to. We are meant to emerge stronger and finer. In one sense temptation is not so much the penalty of being a man; it is the glory of being a man. If metal is to be used in a great engineering project, it is tested at stresses and strains far beyond those which it is ever likely to have to bear. So a man has to be tested before God can use him greatly in his service.

All that is true; but it is also true that the Bible is never in any doubt that there is a power of evil in this world. The Bible is not a speculative book, and it does not discuss the origin of that power of evil, but it knows that it is there. Quite certainly this petition of the Lord's Prayer should be translated not, "Deliver us from evil," but, "Deliver us from the Evil One." The Bible does not think of evil as an abstract principle or force, but as an active, personal power in opposition to God.

William Barclay, *the Gospel of Matthew*, pp.

"And lead us not into temptation": "We do not ask to be totally exempt from temptation, for human life is one continuous temptation (cf. Job 7:1). What, then, do we pray for in this petition? We pray that the divine assistance may not forsake us, lest having been deceived, or worsted, we should yield to temptation; and that the grace of God may be at hand to succour us when our strength fails, to refresh and invigorate us in our trials" ([St Pius V, Catechism](#), 4, 15, 14).

Navarre Bible on *Matthew 6*

4 Defense against temptation

We have thought of the attack of temptation; let us now assemble our defences against temptation.

(i) There is the simple defence of self-respect. When Nehemiah's life was in danger, it was suggested that he should quit his work and shut himself in the Temple until the danger was past. His answer was: "Should such a man as I flee? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in" ([Nehemiah 6:11](#)). A man may escape many things, but he cannot escape himself. He must live with his memories, and if he has lost his self-respect life becomes intolerable. [...]

(ii) There is the defence of tradition. No man can lightly fail the traditions and the heritage into which he has entered, and which have taken generations to build up.[...] The power of a tradition is one of the greatest things in life. We belong to a country, a school, a family, a Church. What we do affects that to which we belong. We cannot lightly betray the traditions into which we have entered.

(iii) There is the defence of those whom we love and those who love us. Many a man would sin, if the only penalty he had to bear was the penalty he would have to bear himself; but he is saved from sin because he could not meet the pain that would appear in someone's eyes, if he made shipwreck of his life.

A man might be perfectly willing to pay the price of sin, if that price affected only himself. But if he remembers that his sin will break someone else's heart, he will have a strong defence against temptation.

(iv) There is the defence of the presence of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not a figure in a book; he is a living presence. Sometimes we ask, "What would you do, if you suddenly found Christ standing beside you? How would you live, if Jesus Christ was a guest in your house?" But the whole point of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is beside us, and he is a guest in every home. His is the unescapable presence, and, therefore, we must make all life fit for him to see. We have a strong defence against temptation in the memory of the continual presence of Jesus Christ.

William Barclay, the Gospel of Matthew, pp.

5 The Evil One

This second part of the sixth petition repeats more or less what was said in the first part, though in a positive manner (unlike the negative first part).

Christians beg God to preserve them from evil. Though the personal meaning of 'ponerou' (masculine of 'poneros' to indicate Satan) is preferred, it does not exclude the meaning of 'evil' (neuter).

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

The picture is that the evil one is constantly trying to seduce disciples into this place, and so disciples are to pray, "Don't let it happen!" [...] Temptation is a pit into which we fall, the evil one is the power whose influence draws us to the pit.

Frederik Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1 The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Eerdmans 1987) p. 312-314.

He here calls the devil "the wicked one," commanding us to wage against him a war that knows no truce, and implying that he is not such by nature. For wickedness is not of those things that are from nature, but of them that are added by our own choice. And he is so called pre-eminently, by reason of the excess of his wickedness, and because he, in no respect injured by us, wages against us implacable war. Wherefore neither said He, "deliver us from the wicked ones," but, "from the wicked one;" instructing us in no case to entertain displeasure against our neighbors, for what wrongs soever we may suffer at their hands, but to transfer our enmity from these to him, as being himself the cause of all our wrongs.

Having then made us anxious as before conflict, by putting us in mind of the enemy, and having cut away from us all our remissness; He again encourages and raises our spirits, by bringing to our remembrance the King under whom we are arrayed, and signifying Him to be more powerful than all. "For Thine," saith He, "is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory."

Chrysostom, *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 19.6*

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Even though we often hear the prayer as "deliver us from evil," in the Greek, it suggests "the evil one" -- meaning the devil. In this sense, we are ask to be spared temptations we can't handle, that come from "the evil one." The root of this word for evil is *pain*. It implies toil and misery - the things that accompany the evil we may experience in life, even when it comes in forms that make it hard for us to recognize, tempting.

Daily Exegesis - Our Father in heaven - the Lord's Prayer/ Bible Commentary on Daily Readings

Jesus is not telling the worshipper to pray from an abstract force called "evil" but from an enemy of the kingdom, the Evil One. The presence of the article also adds to the point that this is not an evil force but the Evil One.

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel Jesus is tempted by the Evil One and has victory. This victory Jesus has over the Evil One in the wilderness allows the citizens of the present and oncoming kingdom to participate in that victory.

[...]

The external temptation the petitioner is seeking help from is the Tempter. He is the one who has caused havoc throughout the Redemptive Story starting with Adam and continuing with Job, David, Judas and Peter. None have been safe unless their Royal Mediator Jesus intervened.

Here the worshipper, prostrate before the King seeks intervention on a cosmic scale. The Satan has blinded men, put evil thoughts into their minds and he seeks to devour men.

This enemy of the King has no power to bind the will, affect the understanding, or mold the judgment, this alone belongs to the Sovereign God but the enemy does tempt and in his own elusive ways. He works tempting the desires of the sinful nature to cause actions displeasing the King.

Exegesis of The Lord's Prayer Matthew 6/9-13 « Nil Nisi Verum

Translations and scholars are divided over whether *the evil* mentioned in the final petition refers to evil in general or the devil in particular. The original Greek, as well as the Latin version, could be either of neuter (evil in general) or masculine (the evil one) gender. In earlier parts of the Sermon on the Mount, in which Matthew's version of the prayer appears, the term is used to refer to general evil. Later parts of Matthew refer to the devil when discussing similar issues. However, the devil is never referred to as *the evil one* in any Aramaic sources. While John Calvin accepted the vagueness of the term's meaning, he considered that there is little real difference between the two interpretations, and that therefore the question is of no real consequence. Similar phrases are found in John 17:15 and 2 Thessalonians 3:3.

Lord's Prayer - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Deliverance from Yetzer Hara

The origin of this despair is what Jewish tradition calls *yetzer hara*, or the inner impulse to gravitate toward selfish gratification (idolatry). This concept first appears in Genesis 6:5 where the wickedness of man is described as "every imagination (*yetzer*) of the thoughts of his heart was only evil (*ra*)." In the New Testament, *yetzer hara* is called the "carnal mind," the "old nature," or the "natural man."

The word *yetzer* itself is a neutral word used to refer to something formed or shaped, like pottery fashioned by the hand of a potter. Just as a potter purposes a shape before forming an object, so that which is intended within the heart will form our character. But since God has "power over the clay" to make one vessel fit for honor and another for dishonor (**Romans 9:21**), we are to appeal to the Father alone for deliverance from the evil impulse.

The ultimate source of the evil impulse is *hara* itself, that is, the evil one, since it is Satan who seeks to entice us into idolatry. Satan does this in order to rob God of His glory by blinding us to the truth of His love and of our desperate need for Him. He seduces us with vain imaginations that we might be satisfied with things other than God Himself. But Yeshua instructs us to pray to be delivered from the evil one by the power of God's salvation.

The Lord's Prayer in Hebrew - Part 5

6 Deliver us

"But deliver us from the evil one". The word for "deliver," "snatch," an almost violent synonym - is a very strong word. It suggests that the Evil One is constantly luring us toward his mines and pits and that only the Father's constant and more powerful snatching, seizing, and rescuing can free us from destruction. This particular petition recognizes that deliverance from the Evil One is not within humanity's grasp: for this the power and grace of God are needed.

Frederik Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1 The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Eerdmans 1987) p. 312-314.

After all these things, in the conclusion of the prayer comes a brief clause, which shortly and comprehensively sums up all our petitions and our prayers. For we conclude by saying, "*But deliver us from evil,*" comprehending all adverse things which the enemy attempts against us in this world, from which there may be a faithful and sure protection if God deliver us, if He afford His help to us who pray for and implore it. And when we say, Deliver us from evil, there remains nothing further which ought to be asked. When we have once asked for God's protection against evil, and have obtained it, then against everything which the devil and the world work against us we stand secure and safe. For what fear is there in this life, to the man whose guardian in this life is God?

Augustine, *Sermon on the Mount*, 2.10.36-37

Moreover, the Lord of necessity admonishes us to say in prayer, "And suffer us not to be led into temptation." In which words it is shown that the adversary can do nothing against us except God shall have previously permitted it; so that all our fear, and devotion, and obedience may be turned towards God, since in our temptations nothing is permitted to evil unless power is given from Him. This is proved by divine Scripture, which says, "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and besieged it; and the Lord delivered it into his hand." power is given to evil against us according to our sins, as it is written, "Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to those who make a prey of Him? Did not the Lord, against whom they sinned, and would not walk in His ways, nor hear His law? And He has brought upon them the anger of His wrath." And again, when Solomon sinned, and departed from the Lord's commandments and ways, it is recorded, "And the Lord stirred up Satan against Solomon himself."

[...] And the Lord in His Gospel says, in the time of His passion, "You could have no power against me unless it were given you from above." But when we ask that we may not come into temptation, we are reminded of our infirmity and weakness in that we thus ask, lest any should insolently vaunt himself, lest any should proudly and arrogantly assume anything to himself, lest any should take to himself the glory either of confession or of suffering as his own, when the Lord Himself, teaching humility, said,

Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak; so that while a humble and submissive confession comes first, and all is attributed to God, whatever is sought for suppliantly with fear and honour of God, may be granted by His own loving-kindness.

Cyprian, *Treatises, On the Lord's Prayer* 25-26

In this petition of the Our Father we recognize that our human efforts alone do not take us very far in trying to cope with temptation, and that we need to have humble recourse to God, to get the strength we need. For, "God is strong enough to free you from everything and can do you more good than all the devils can do you harm. All that God decrees is that you confide in him, that you draw near him, that you trust him and distrust yourself, and so be helped; and with this help you will defeat whatever hell brings against you. Never lose hold of this firm hope [...] even if the demons are legion and all kinds of severe temptations harass you. Lean upon Him, because if the Lord is not your support and your strength, then you will fall and you will be afraid of everything" (St John of Avila, *Sermons*, 9, First Sunday of Lent).

Navarre Bible on *Matthew* 6

7 Like Jesus

With the prayer about deliverance from temptation (*peirasmos*) and the evil one (*ho poneros*) of Matt. 6:13, we are back again with Jesus. Again, the temptation narratives of Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 are close at hand as part of the context; and again, the Gethsemane scene and the complex of "trials" before Caiaphas and Pilate offer themselves as the wider setting.

Jesus' whole public career was marked by "trials" of one sort or another — by what he, and the evangelists, saw as a running battle with the powers of evil, whether in the form of possessed souls shrieking in the synagogues or angry souls challenging in the marketplace. The fact that Jesus was not spared these trials, but had to face them at their fiercest, suggests a clue as to the meaning of this controversial clause, which we will pursue later.

Here in the prayer of deliverance is, once again, one of the clearest overtones in the Lord's Prayer: "Let me be as my Master." "You are those," says Jesus in Luke 22:28, "who have continued with me in my trials (*en tois peirasmois mou*)." So in giving this prayer, Jesus is inviting his followers to share his own struggles and to experience the same spirituality that sustained him.

N.T. Wright, *The Lord's Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer* (Originally published in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. R.L. Longenecker. 2001, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 132-54. Reproduced by permission of the author.)

[Striking] similarities between the Lord's Temptations (chap. 4) and the Lord's Prayer: In the Temptations, "Command these stones to become bread"; in the Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread"; in the Temptations, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God";

in the Prayer: "Let us not get into temptation"; in the Temptations, "He showed him all the kingdoms of the world"; in the Prayer: "Your kingdom come."

Frederik Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 1 The Christbook, Matthew 1-12* (Eerdmans 1987) p. 312-314.

8 Exodus / Eschatological prayer

The normal assumption is that the prayer is asking to be spared having one's faith tested by God. But the tradition throughout early Christianity that sees the testing of one's faith as a necessary part of discipleship — indeed, as a following of Jesus — speaks strongly against such an understanding. Is it, then, as Albert Schweitzer thought, the eschatological *peirasmos*— the Great Tribulation, the worst moment in history — that the prayer is asking to be spared from? A strong case for this reading can be made out, and I have myself taken this line in the past (cf. *Jesus and the Victory of God*, esp. 577-79).

On this view, Jesus believed that "Messianic Woes" were coming on Israel, and that it was his particular task and vocation to go out ahead and take the full weight of them on himself, so that the people would not need to undergo them. This would explain the repetition in Gethsemane of his command to his disciples: "Watch and pray, that you may not enter the *peirasmos*" ([Matt. 26:41](#); [Mark 14:38](#); [Luke 22:46](#)) — meaning by that command: "Pray that you may be spared this great moment of anguish; it is my task to enter it alone." [...]

But it remains somewhat strange to see this as the complete explanation of "lead us not into temptation." For if the early church came to believe that in some sense the great *peirasmos* had, indeed, happened to Jesus on the cross, why would they have continued to pray this clause in the Lord's Prayer thereafter? Granted, the fall of Jerusalem, which was still in the future for those who handed on the early traditions, had been spoken of by Jesus in similarly dramatic terms, as witness Mark 13 and its parallels. But what about after that, in the period when we must assume the *Didache*, at least, to have been written — and most likely the Gospels of Matthew and Luke as well?

One possible answer, of course, is that in the days following AD 70 the church looked beyond the fall of Jerusalem to the final moment when God would redeem the whole of creation — and that such a futuristic vision included a final, yet-to-occur tribulation. But this possibility, which we can see reflected perhaps in the Book of Revelation, only sharpens the question. For then we must ask: Did the church expect to be in some sense spared the sufferings of this final tribulation? Did not salvation consist, rather, in remaining faithful within it? This, then, leads us to reconsider the Exodus tradition and to search for other possible meanings.

The most probable explanation, I propose, is that the "testing" is not God's testing of his people but the people's testing of God (cf. J. Gibson, "Testing Temptation"). One

of the central charges against the wilderness generation was that they, in their unbelief, “put YHWH to the test” by challenging him to produce demonstrations of his presence with them (cf. [Exod. 17:7](#)). The particular issue, of course, was YHWH’s provision of water from the rock, which followed directly on the people’s grumbling about food and YHWH’s provision of manna. The deuteronomic memory of the wilderness “testings” echoes on in the prophetic traditions, with Ahaz using the old warning as an excuse not to look for the sign that Isaiah was offering (cf. [Isa. 7:12](#); see also [Ps. 78:18, 41, 56; 95:9; 106:14](#)). In one of Paul’s alignments of the church with the wilderness generation, he cites this specifically as a central failing that the church must not emulate (cf. [1 Cor. 10:9](#)). This was, more specifically, one of the key failings of the wilderness generation that Jesus specifically avoided during his initial temptations (cf. [Matt. 4:7](#)//[Luke 4:12](#), quoting [Deut. 6:16](#)).

The passage in Paul’s letters in which this theme finds expression — that is, [1 Cor. 10:9](#): “We must not test the Lord [or, ‘the Christ’] as some of them did” — also suggests that the early church had become used to taking “the *peirasmos*” in a wider sense than simply the sharply focused eschatological one. For in 1 Corinthians 10 Paul draws a close parallel between the church and the wilderness generation, speaking of that earlier generation as having been “baptized” into Moses (v. 2) and as having all eaten “spiritual food” and drunk “spiritual drink” (w. 3-4). Their testing of the Lord — or, as the preferred reading has it, of “the Christ” — was one aspect of their many-sided failure.

Nonetheless, when Paul speaks of *peirasmos* a few verses later, it is clear that he means not the Israelites’ testing of God but the “temptations” that come on God’s people, not least from the pagan environment in which they live. [1 Cor. 10:13](#) is the clearest statement of what *peirasmos* had come to mean in the early church and of how, with its Exodus overtones, it was being reapplied:

No *peirasmos* has overtaken you but that which is normal to the human race. God is faithful: he will not allow you to be tested beyond your strength. He will make, with the *peirasmos*, also the way out, so that you are able to bear it.

This can only refer to the much more general “temptation,” within which the temptation to put God to the test is one, but only one.

What we see here in this reapplication of the Exodus tradition is not so much the downgrading of eschatology into moralism, but the taking up of moral instruction into typological eschatology. Paul will not rest content with simply telling the Corinthians how to behave and chiding them if they go wrong. He will teach them to think of themselves as the people of the true Exodus, and within that framework show them how the moral struggles they face — including the temptation to devise tests to see how strong their Lord is — are the equivalent of the temptations which brought the wilderness generation to ruin. They must now succeed where their typological predecessors failed.

Who, then, is the author of this “temptation” of [1 Cor. 10:13](#)? Paul does not say directly, but the context strongly implies that it is the evil one. Despite the apostle’s firm conviction regarding the sovereignty of God, such “testings” come from “the Satan” (cf. [1 Cor. 7:5](#); the word *peirasmos* occurs in the Pauline corpus only in [1 Cor. 10:13](#); [Gal. 4:14](#); and [1 Tim. 6:9](#)). 1 Corinthians 10, therefore, might be seen as a practical commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, particularly on its concluding clauses. What Paul, in effect, is saying is: You are the Exodus generation; therefore trust God to lead you out of your moment of testing without succumbing to it — that is, to deliver you from the evil one.

If this is accepted, then we may understand the last part of the Lord’s Prayer (i.e., the last two clauses in Matthew’s version and the *Didache*) as follows: Jesus’ followers are instructed to pray that they may be spared the great *peirasmos* that is coming on Jesus himself and the cognate tribulation that is coming on Jerusalem and the whole world. To this extent, the petition is similar to what Jesus urges in [Matt. 24:20](#)//[Mark 13:18](#): “Pray that your flight may not be in winter.”

But the petition also broadens out to include all of what Paul speaks about — that is, the variegated temptations, which, coming from “the Satan,” include the temptation to put God to the test, but also include such other sins as idolatry and grumbling. Thus “Lead us not into temptation” would then mean, in that broader context, “Do not let us be led into temptation [from which we cannot escape].” The fact that God has promised to be faithful and to provide the way of escape does not mean, in the logic of New Testament prayer, that one should not pray for it, but rather the reverse. Those who pray the Lord’s Prayer are designed by Jesus to be those who remain faithful to the God who intends to remain faithful to them — and who thereby constitute the true eschatological Israel, the people of the New Exodus.

N.T. Wright, *The Lord’s Prayer as a Paradigm of Christian Prayer* (Originally published in *Into God’s Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. R.L. Longenecker. 2001, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 132-54. Reproduced by permission of the author.)

9 Assurance

In making this request we can be sure that our prayer will be heard because Jesus Christ, when he was on the point of leaving this world, prayed to the Father for the salvation of all men: “I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one” (Jn 17:15).

Navarre Bible on *Matthew 6*