



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

God and Our Temptations

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After a sermon on the Disciples' Prayer (Matt 6.9-13), a woman in the congregation asked a question she said she had long wondered about. What are we to make of the command to pray, "and lead us not into temptation?"

Does God really *do* that? If so, is he really all good, as we commonly affirm? Given his power, if he leads us into temptation, how can we possibly resist? And if we surrender to the temptation, are we really accountable? Is he right to judge us for our failure?

First, there is a difference between being *led* into temptation and being *allowed* to be tempted. Jesus experienced the latter, but not the former. The Spirit led him to where he would be tempted (or tested; the Greek word can mean either) (Matt 4.1), but the devil did the tempting. James was emphatic that God does not tempt us to do evil (Jas 1.13). Paul taught that God both restricts the temptation to what we can manage and provides a way of escape so that sin is never the necessary result (1 Cor 10.13).

Second, notice the rest of the petition in Matthew 6.13 (Luke 11.1-4 omits this): "...but deliver us from evil." Students of the ancient biblical languages have noted that the Disciples' Prayer readily reverts from the Greek to the Aramaic that was first century Israel's native tongue, and that when it does, the petitions have both rhythm and rhyme. In other words, the prayer, like many of its Jewish counterparts of the time, is poetic in form. That poetry utilizes parallelisms, a literary device wherein the second line explains the first. So, in the couplet, "let your reign come, let your will be done" (v. 10), God's will being done shows that he is reigning. Likewise, "but deliver us from evil" explains the meaning of "lead us not into temptation." (For more on the Aramaic background and poetic form and the prayer generally, see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 147-157).

In view of the Aramaic background, Craig Blomberg suggests that "lead us not into temptation" is probably "best taken as 'don't let us succumb to temptation' (cf. Mark 14:38) or 'don't abandon us to temptation'" (Blomberg, *Matthew*, 120).

In the same spirit that we pray, “give us our daily bread,” we pray, “and lead us not into temptation.” We are affirming our complete trust in God to give us what we need so that we will be all he created us to be.

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