



March 30, 2017
The Lord's Prayer, The Sixth Petition
"Save us from the time of trial..."

[Read Matthew 4:4-11](#)

The traditional, "churchy" translation of the Lord's Prayer puts this petition in these words: "Lead us not into temptation." Those words have troubled many Christians over the centuries. Why should we have to pray that God would refrain from leading us into temptation? Certainly God wants to lead us away from temptation, not toward it!

I appreciate the more contemporary translation that we have here. This petition is about God's gifts of persistence and patience, courage and strength in the face of life's challenges and tests. It's important to remember where the Catechisms begin. We start with the First Commandment which means that we are to fear, love and trust God above all things. The whole Catechism hangs on that First Commandment.

So the greatest trial is about faith, not suffering. It is about the faith that is trust, not the faith of intellectual assent. In the loss of a loved one, for example, I didn't really question whether God exists. What mattered most to me was whether or not God cared, whether or not God is good, whether or not God can be trusted in life and in death. That's the real faith trial for any of us and all of us.

This petition is first of all a prayer that God will make good on God's promise in the Third Article of the Creed. I believe that on my own I cannot believe. By my own understanding and strength I cannot trust in Jesus, call him Lord, and depend on him in life and in death. So I pray here that in the midst of the struggles of this life, the Holy Spirit will create in me and renew in me the gift of that trust in God's grace and mercy that will sustain me in the face of such trials.

In the *Small Catechism* Luther prays "that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair and other great and shameful sins..." It's not so much that God desires to punish us for false belief, despair and other such faults. Rather these faults are punishment enough in and of themselves. If you have no genuine despair—that dark night of the soul that seems like it will never end—then you know that no other "punishment" is necessary. We humans can experience no greater pain than the feeling that we have no hope left.

So in this prayer we open ourselves to the hope that God alone can give. The Holy Spirit calls us through the Good News of Jesus our Lord and Savior. That call gives us the faith, hope and love to go through the deepest and darkest alleys of this life.

Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, send your Holy Spirit into my heart today to create the gift of faith. Strengthen that gift especially in those moments when I am trapped in hopelessness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Do something: Send a note or an email or make a call to someone who needs encouragement today. Be one of the ways the Holy Spirit builds up the faith of the desperate.

Pastor Lowell Hennigs
Emanuel Lutheran Church
2444 N Broadway
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503-0499
www.emanuelcb.org