

it, either in the impenitent sinner or in Christ, the gracious substitute for all those the Father eternally gave Him (John 17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24).

Note carefully that God does not sin or engage in any evil activity. Instead, it is man and fallen angels who sin and break Jehovah's commandments. Contrary to extreme hyper-Calvinists, God is not the author or doer of sin, for such is blasphemy (*Belgic Confession* 13; *Canons* I:15). Men and demons are the authors and doers of sin.

The *Westminster Confession* provides a superb summary: "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be, the author or approver of sin" (V:4).

We need to distinguish carefully. There is a difference between tempting and trying. The devil and his angels (and other sinful human beings) tempt us: they want us to sin because they love evil and wish to ruin us. On the other hand, God tries and tests His people. He does not love sin; He hates it. He does not hate us; He loves us. He uses difficult circumstances to try and test us for our good and to purify us by His grace.

To put it slightly differently, of course, it is God the sovereign Lord who *leads us into temptation*, for everything is under His control. On the other hand, Satan *tempts us*, wanting us to fall into sin and desiring to destroy us.

Do you have this straight, believer? First, as regards God, He does not tempt anyone (James 1:13); Jehovah tries us and tests us and leads into temptation. Yea, He leads us into temptation in order to try and test us. Second, Satan tempts us, as the one who loves evil and wants our ruin in sin. Third, the authors or doers of sin are fallen angels and fallen humans, who wickedly yield to temptation.

Only in Christ crucified and risen is the believer free from the guilt, punishment and dominion of sin. Only by the power of Jesus' Word and Spirit is the child of God able to overcome temptation. Thus we pray the sixth petition: "*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*"; that is, since we are so weak in ourselves that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh cease not to assault us, do Thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory" (*Heidelberg Catechism*, A. 127).

Rev. Stewart

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# Covenant Reformed News

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## "Lead Us Not Into Temptation" and Pope Francis

In a video in December, 2017, Pope Francis claimed that "lead us not into temptation" is a bad translation of the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. However, this is a very accurate rendering of the words of the Lord Jesus in the original Greek.

The Pope made this outrageous statement because he cannot reconcile Christ's teaching with his own base view of God's sovereignty. Semi-Pelagianism, which is akin to Arminianism, is Rome's historic position. However, contemporary Romanism and its Pope have degenerated such that they are more accurately described as Pelagian, which is even further from the truth than the heresy of Semi-Pelagianism.

Francis and the Roman Church believe that man is not totally, but only partly, depraved and so is able to do good works that please God (contra Rom. 3:9-20). According to them, Jehovah loves and wants to save everybody, and so Christ died for all head for head (contra Matt. 11:25-27; Eph. 5:25). Every pleasant thing is grace to all men absolutely and is proof that God loves everybody (contra Rom. 11:7-10).

This is a wicked denial of the biblical and Reformed truth of God's particular grace and love in His election, Christ's redemption and the salvation applied by the Holy Spirit (John 17; Rom. 9:6-24; Eph. 1:3-14; I Pet. 1:1-12). It should not be too much of a surprise to Christians that this is the heretical papal position. Even more disturbing is that the views in the previous paragraph are also the teaching of most of Evangelicalism!

For the Roman church and its pontiff, God's sovereignty is an extremely meagre thing. According to their position, Jehovah could accurately be presented as the great spectator who watches the earth (and weeps!). He does not govern everything in the world and thus He is not truly sovereign at all!

So the Pope reckons that, when Jesus taught us to pray, "lead us not into temptation," He is wrong, for only the devil leads into temptation. Thus Francis opts for the recent French Roman Catholic false retranslation of the sixth petition, which in English would read, "do not let me fall into temptation." Thus the alleged vicar of Christ corrects the true Christ! The papal antichrist thinks he knows better than the biblical Christ!

The truth is that the Triune God is absolutely sovereign over all things, including every sin and every temptation. Absolutely everything, including every sin and every temptation, was included in God's *eternal decree*. Yet Jehovah does not approve of sin and is not soft towards it. Instead, He hates it—always, infinitely! Absolutely everything, including every sin and every temptation, occurs in God's *providence* in time. The Most High orders, bounds and disposes all things, whilst always hating sin and punishing

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## Do Not Tell!

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A reader asks, “Why did Christ command those whom He healed not to tell who healed them, yet we are commanded to witness of Him?”

In addition to the historical fact that Jesus commanded some whom He healed not to reveal who healed them, He also told only a few who He truly was. First, He said He was the Christ to the Samaritan woman (John 4:25-26). Second, He identified Himself as the Son of God to the man born blind whom He healed (John 9:35-37).

It is striking that both instances are recorded in John’s gospel narrative, for John’s express purpose in writing his gospel, under divine and infallible inspiration, is given in chapter 20:31: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

A third incident in which Christ declared who He was is recorded in Matthew 16:13-20. This passage describes Jesus’ question put to His disciples: “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” After receiving the answer, Jesus put the same question to the disciples. Peter, speaking for all of the disciples, said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus confirmed this truth by telling them that this confession would be the rock on which He would build His church. Yet, even then, Jesus “charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.”

Why the command not to tell? Setting aside for the moment Jesus’ injunction to His disciples in Matthew 16, we should notice that both the Samaritan woman and the man born blind were already inclined to think that He was the Messiah. The woman from Samaria hinted at this when she said that she knew and believed that the promised Messiah would come. She as much as asked Him, “Art thou that Messiah?”

The same was true of the blind man. He called Jesus “Lord,” which name already set Jesus aside from others whom the blind man knew. But his question is also a sort of revelation of his inward questioning: he wanted to believe but was not sure Jesus was the promised Messiah. In other words, both the Samaritan woman and the man born blind saw that Jesus was divine, that is, the Son of God. God had put this faith within their hearts.

But with so many others who were healed, this was not the case. They did not have this saving faith. Again, it is John who gives us insight into this matter. At a very early time in our Lord’s ministry, after He had cleansed the temple (John 2:14-22), we read that Jesus was in Jerusalem where He performed many miracles and many believed on Him. But, John adds, “Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man” (24-25).

In other words, many believed in Jesus only as a miracle-worker. They did not see Him as the Samaritan woman and the man born blind saw Him, as the promised Messiah, the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent and deliver them from their sins. Jesus knew all men, including who were and who were not true believers. He knew that most of them who swarmed around Him did so because of His eloquence as

a preacher and His ability to perform miracles.

Again John makes this clear when Jesus had fed the crowds with five loaves and two fishes. When He would not be their king and would not feed them with earthly bread, and when He pointed out to them that He was the Bread of Life and that faith that He was from God was required of them, we read “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:66).

When Jesus turned to His disciples and asked them whether they wanted to leave as well, their answer, with Peter again as the spokesman, was, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (68-69).

By all this, I do not mean to say that many of those who believed in Christ only for the miracles were not God’s elect. Later history tells us that there were thousands who were the chosen people of God, though as yet they did not believe in Christ as God’s Son.

In the purpose of God, that true faith in the hearts of His people had to wait for Pentecost. Even the disciples who possessed true faith did not understand Christ’s work in its entirety. Just before Christ’s ascension into heaven, they asked, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). In their carnality, they kept thinking of an earthly kingdom. It was only after the Spirit of Christ was poured out that all became clear: the cross, the resurrection, the ascension and the New Testament church. The Spirit made all the difference, for the Spirit, as Christ Himself had told them, would lead them into the truth and make all Christ’s work plain (John 16:13).

How frequently the same mistake is made by today’s throngs that fill mega-churches. They believe in a Christ who does healing miracles today (or so the Charismatics claim) or that faith in Him will guarantee a trouble-free life here in this world of sin and darkness or that believing will give them prosperity and wealth. They may claim to follow Christ but they are following a phantom. More subtly, many claim to believe in Christ because He loves all men, gives them a chance to be saved and lets them have a gloss of religion while their hearts remain in the world.

True faith confesses that we are totally depraved sinners who cannot believe of ourselves and who do not deserve salvation. We know our sins and realize that only God can save us by the power of His irresistible grace. We know that our salvation was accomplished in the cross and to that cross we flee with broken hearts and cries of sorrow.

So, my answer is this: Miracles themselves were only signs of Christ and what He did as Saviour. Healing blindness is a sign of Christ’s gift of healing our spiritual blindness. Making the lame walk was a sign of Christ’s work of enabling us to walk in the way of His commandments. Raising the dead points to Christ’s work of raising us from our spiritual death to new and heavenly life. And so it was with all the miracles. But the faith of many ended with miracles. Christ does not want to be known merely as a miracle-worker. He is the Saviour and Redeemer of His people, and faith in Him brings true heavenly salvation and deliverance from all our physical and spiritual ailments and troubles in the next world. That He saves me is the greatest miracle of all! *Prof. Hanko*