

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰ your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today our daily bread. ¹² Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

We are spending this month diving deep into prayer as a church family, and especially into learning how Jesus taught us to pray in what is called the Lord's Prayer. Four weeks ago we looked at the first line, and learned that prayer is communication with God that involves both intimacy and deference, with the purpose of bringing our perspective and priorities in line with His. Three weeks ago we looked at line 2: "Give us today our daily bread," and how it encourages us to pray with dependence, boldness, and trust. Last week we looked at "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," and how understanding the debt that we owed to God, which He has forgiven, helps us to forgive others. This week is the last line: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Jesus begins the prayer by telling us that we need to align our lives with God's kingdom priorities. He tells us that we need to depend upon him for our needs and ask boldly for them. Then we confess our sins to Him and forgive others who have sinned against us. And now we ask Him for protection and deliverance from the evil around us.

Let me begin by clearing up one question: does God lead us into temptation? No, according to James:

James 1:13-14 - *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴ but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.*

The Greek word "pyrazmon," translated here as temptation, can mean test, trial, or temptation. **Do not lead us into a situation where we will be tested and tempted to sin. Keep me from times of trial and testing.** Protect me from the enemy and from the evil he brings. Even though we may look back and see that it was times of testing that built character, that does not mean we want more trials to come our way.

Let me share three things we learn from this line in the Lord's prayer about temptation and evil.

1) We have an enemy who wants to destroy us

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.” (CS Lewis, The Screwtape Letters)

There is an evil one – the devil, Satan, which means “the adversary.” And there is evil. As much as some might wish to believe in the myth of progress, that the world is continually getting better as we become more educated, a close look around the world tells us that this just isn’t so. There are still wars, oppression, genocide, starvation, murder, rape, and so on. Just turn on the nightly news or open your news feed online and you are slapped in the face by the evil and suffering of the world.

The Bible is clear that there is a devil. It tells us that Satan is a created being, an angel who rebelled against God and took 1/3 of the angels with him, and is now bent on destroying the people of God. He is called by many names: the **adversary** – working against the people of God; **the accuser of the brethren** – accusing us before God; **the ruler of this world**; **the tempter**, tempting us to sin, testing us to leave or disobey God. **He is a roaring lion** seeking who he can devour, and he disguises himself as an **angel of light**. **He is the thief** who comes to steal, kill, and destroy.

He can work through people (like Peter in Matthew 16:23 or Judas in John 13:2). He can snatch away the word of God before it takes root in your life. **But he is not all-powerful or all-knowing**. He only works within the limits God lays down. Jesus came to destroy the work of the devil. Jesus healed those who were under the power of the devil. At the cross, Satan is judged and cast out, giving God the victory. There is an eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and in Rev 20:10, John sees this come to pass.

***Genesis 4:6-7** - Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? ⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."*

Jesus teaches us to pray that God would deliver us from evil, or from the evil one. This world is full of evil, and it desires to master you.

2) We will face challenges that will test us

Expect the tests of life

1 Peter 4:12-13 - Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

John 16:33 - "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

A lot of your discouragement and disillusionment comes because of a false view of the life of faith. Some of you have been sold a false gospel, one of health and wealth, victory and bliss. But that is not Biblical. Even the most righteous suffer. Jesus was perfect and suffered. Paul suffered.

It's the difference between a vacation view of Christianity and a war view. You are entering a battle. You will be tested. There is an enemy who has come to steal, kill, and destroy. And so as we face tests, we are tempted to sin, to disobey God, to turn from Him.

You will be tested. The questions, is what will the test reveal about you?

1 Peter 1:6-7 - In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith-- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire-- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

When the test comes, it is too late to prepare. Prepare now for the tests that are coming. The test reveals character.

3) The real enemy is evil, not suffering

In tests, the real enemy is evil, not pain. It's not the circumstances, but evil. Sin can ruin you; suffering can not. You can pray for God to change your circumstances, but in the end, if the circumstances don't change, pray that God would deliver you from the evil one so that you can pass the test, walking through it trusting in Him. Look to Jesus in Gethsemane – if possible, let this cup pass, but not my will but yours be done.

Coal under pressure turns into a diamond. If you respond to your circumstances with trust and faith, it will turn you into a diamond. Tests and trials can prove that your faith is genuine.

God's priority for your life is deliverance from sin. And sometimes that means allowing us to go through times of trial and testing. As Joni Eareckson Tada put it, *"The same God who healed eyes and hands also said gouge out your eye if it causes you to sin. Cut off your hand if it leads you into sin."* Physical healing is important, but spiritual healing is necessary, or we will end up in Hell. Your soul is a much bigger deal to God.

So we pray for God to deliver us from evil. And he will deliver us if we let him.

1 Corinthians 10:12-13 - So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³ No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

How does God deliver us from evil?

a) Confess & repent

Ephesians 4:26-27 - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Think of your life as a house. Jesus uses that metaphor himself in Luke 11 when talking about how demons can affect you. Giving the devil a foothold is like leaving the door open, even it is just a crack, so that he can come inside. Not many of you would be comfortable sleeping with all your windows and doors wide open. But that is what many of you are doing spiritually. You rest, but you have left openings to the influence of demons everywhere.

Bitterness and unforgiveness. False religion and false spirituality. Letting yourself be controlled by substances. Allowing unchecked sexual sin. Laziness and apathy. Idolatry – worshiping anything other than Jesus. Unconfessed sin.

John 10:10 - The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

If your life is like a house, than in order to not give the devil a foothold, you need to clean house, shut the doors, and invite the Holy Spirit in. **Confession & repentance is how you clean house.** Just as you would tour your home before going to bed to be sure things are locked down, do the same spiritually.

But cleaning your home is not enough – you’ve got to fill your house with the Holy Spirit:

b) Believe the gospel

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might **destroy** him who holds the power of death-- that is, the **devil**-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Ephesians 6:10-17 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

When we sin and Satan accuses us, we can tell him that yes, we are a sinner, but we have been forgiven.

c) Submit to God

Luke 11:24-26 - "When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' ²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first."

As you can see, once the house is “swept clean”, it is still empty unless you have filled your life with the Spirit. Submit yourselves to God. Stand on the authority you have in Jesus & resist the devil

James 4:7 - *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* In short, do what God says, and do not do what the devil says.

Remember that the enemy is like a roaring lion, or a thief, and he will lie, deceive, manipulate, use other people, and generally do whatever he can to get inside the house that is your life. His goal is to destroy your life, to get you to believe that God is not good, that you can not trust Him, that you are not lovable, that God does not love you. His goal is to ruin your life by causing you to believe that sin will not have consequences, that disobeying God will be better than following Him. Resist him and submit to Jesus.

d) Know God's Word

How do you submit? Know and obey the word of God. That is the sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:10-17 - *Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

That is how Jesus fought against the enemy – “It is written.”

This is not a country club but a battle. Stand and fight.

1 Peter 5:8-9 - *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

e) Don't enter the battle alone

Deliver US from evil. Pray for each other.

James 5:16 - *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

Be in community. Confess your sins and pray for each other.