

Deliver Us From the Evil One

Matthew 6:13

By [Rev. Kevin Chiarot](#)

We come this morning to the sixth and final petition of the Lord's Prayer: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, or perhaps more likely, deliver us from the evil one. We should note the connection to the previous petition concerning the forgiveness of debts. Having been pardoned – and praying for daily pardon - there is a recognition of our remaining, abiding weakness. And of our need going forward, for deliverance from the tyranny of temptation, sin, and the evil one. As the Larger Catechism puts it: even after the pardon of our sins, because of our weakness, we are of ourselves unable and unwilling to resist temptation.

Here we confess that the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep us from doing the things we want to do. And further, we acknowledge that we are not merely up against the flesh, as daunting as that is, but we are on the scene of an apocalyptic battle. We are in the theatre of eschatological events. We are engaged in spiritual warfare, and that, in the face of the supernatural, intelligent powers arrayed against us in the heavenly places, and thus, we are vulnerable, exposed, and in great need.

To pray this petition, then, is to flee to Christ as our rock, our refuge, our fortress. It is to confess that: we are strong only in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. We are strong in the Lord, and only in his grace. To pray like this is to take the posture of the afflicted Paul, and declare that God's grace is sufficient for us, that his power is made perfect in weakness. For God delights in taking strong men – like Paul -- and pulverizing them – so he can do something with them. To pray this prayer is to know that when we are weak, then, and only then, by grace, are we strong. With that, we will make three points, temptation, deliverance, and doxology. First, temptation, the first clause: lead us not into temptation.

I. Temptation

The first question, and it has been discussed for centuries, is, why would God lead anyone into temptation? After all, the book of James warns: 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. So, why ask God NOT to do something

he does not, indeed cannot, do? Part of the answer lies, it is said, in distinguishing between testing and tempting. God tests, we are told, but he doesn't tempt.

There is something correct here, but we must admit that any test can become a temptation, so a hard and fast distinction here is hard to uphold. For example, Jesus was led by the Spirit, that is by God, into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil. He was being tested by his Father; but tempted by the evil one. Yet it was God who led him into the conflict.

God tested Abraham in Genesis 22 with his incomprehensible command to sacrifice Isaac. A test which surely, by its very nature, engendered numerous temptations. In fact, God is testing and trying his people constantly in Scripture. And these various trials can be/become an opportunity for temptation to sin.

So, we can say God tests us, and that this often causes temptation, either from our own flesh (each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire, James says), or from the world (its cares or its seductions), or from the evil one – the father of lies.

So the test verses tempt distinction IS useful—if we handle it carefully. But the bigger issues lie in the combatants in the cosmic warfare in which we are caught up. God, on the one hand, and Satan on the other. The source, that is, the motives, of their actions are in complete contrast. God tests us out of his goodness and love. Satan tempts us out of his malice and hatred. And their goals are also at odds. God seeks to discipline, refine and purify us. Satan seeks to overthrow and destroy, for he was a murderer from the beginning. And because of this, the same James, who says God doesn't tempt anyone, can say trial and testing are good for us:

Count it all joy, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

So this is not a petition asking to be delivered out of all tempting situations – as if such a life were even possible. Jesus, in the beatitudes, has already assured us, that we will have trials and temptations aplenty. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. Through many tribulations we enter the kingdom. And we glory in them, for it is suffering which produces an eternal weight of glory for the saints. 2 Cor. 4

Contrary then to the notion that we will not face temptations, the petition recognizes that temptations of all sorts are going to come. Rather, it is a prayer that we would stand, resist, and conquer temptation. It is a prayer that we would not be overcome. In fact, we have an ancient Jewish evening prayer, which

Jesus quite possibly may have known of, which expresses just this meaning. It says:

Lead me not into the power of transgression / And bring me not into the power of sin/ And not into the power of iniquity / and not into the power of temptation / and not into the power of anything shameful.

Thus, this is a prayer – again in the language of the larger catechism – that God would overrule the world and all in it, subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan. It is a prayer that, in Paul's words, we not be tempted beyond our ability, but with the temptation, that God would provide the way of escape, that we might be able to endure it.

II. Deliverance

Our second point, and, since they are so similar, here we can be brief: our second point is deliverance. Deliver us from evil, most likely, deliver us from the evil one. The one who sanctifies us, causing us to stand in temptation, is now called upon to deliver us. God gave his Son, Paul says, to deliver us out of this present evil age, to, in John's words, to destroy the works of the devil. This is desperate, apocalyptic praying. This is praying for complete and total rescue from evil, and the evil one.

Thus, from praying for the kingdom to come, to praying for the final defeat of the evil one, we are always oriented to the End in this, the model of all true prayer. This is eschatological praying. For the End has arrived in Jesus Christ. Thus, this final defeat, is already underway. Christ has delivered us from the domain of darkness, he has bound the strong man, the evil one. And, lo, his doom is sure. But for now, we are in this situation of war – war against a defeated and yet dangerous foe. War against one who is, paradoxically, defeated, and called the god of this world.

And praying this prayer is part of girding oneself, with the whole armor of God to stand in the evil day. It is knowing that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood, but with malignant evil spiritual powers. Praying this prayer is, to cite the apostle Peter, being sober-minded and watchful. For our adversary the devil -- bound and destined for final defeat in the lake of fire-- he yet prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

This petition reminds us that, until Satan is destroyed, our deliverance and the deliverance of the whole creation, is not fully realized. And, as I mentioned, it is through Jesus Christ, that this victory is, and shall be, manifest.

And here I want us to remember that in the very near context of Matthew's gospel, just back in chapter 4 – Jesus himself, our champion and representative,

faced an onslaught of Satanic temptation. He refused to seek daily bread except from the Father's hand, and at the Father's time. He lived, rather, by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. He refused to test to tempt God in his trials. And he refused to worship and hallow any other name, than the Father's name. He wrought a great triumph in the wilderness against temptation, and an even greater one in Gethsemane and on the cross.

And his victory should be, beloved, a source of great comfort to us here. He has done what Adam and Israel failed to do, what we have failed to do, and what we in our weakness, cannot do. Because he has prevailed against temptation, it shall NOT prevail against you. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who, in every respect has, been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

He who obeyed for us, who suffered and died for us, now ever lives above, as our High Priest, for us to intercede. Even on earth, he prayed fervently for us. In the shadow of the cross, echoing this petition, he tells Peter:

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

Again, echoing the language of our text, in the great high-priestly prayer of John 17, he prays: I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

Jesus, it turns out, prays according to the pattern of the Lord's Prayer – for us. And our intercession, as always, depends, rests upon, his. In the garden, in his own agonizing time of prayer, he told his disciples (Peter, James, and John) basically to repair to this petition: Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

So, let's step back for a second and remember what Jesus is teaching (commanding) us to do. He's commanding us to pray this petition. When's the last time – outside of our worship service -- you prayed it? Are we asking to be led not into temptation, but rescued, delivered from, the evil one? If we are not, it may be that we don't see the world in the dire, apocalyptic terms the NT sees it in. It may be that we don't sense our weakness or vulnerability acutely enough.

If so, then, today the Spirit is speaking a word to sober us, to cause us to gird up our minds – to realize the arena in which we live and move and have our being is a battlefield. To look afresh to Christ the Victor, the conqueror of the evil one. The overcomer of temptation who will lead us not into it; the deliverer, who shall yet deliver us from all evil.

The One who is able to keep you from stumbling, either by keeping you from falling in temptation, or by restoring you as your Advocate when you do fall. And having kept you from stumbling, he will present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy. He is the One who will establish our (weak and vulnerable, wandering) hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at his coming with all his saints.

III. Doxology

This brings us to our third point, the doxology. After the sixth petition, there is a doxology – Thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory forever, Amen – with which the prayer closes. This is not in the best or the oldest NT manuscripts, and, though it is in some ancient manuscripts, is almost certainly not original. *You will note that it doesn't appear in the English text of either Matthew or Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer.*

Nevertheless, by the second century Christians were adding it to the end of the Lord's Prayer. In this, they may well have been following a common and noble Jewish pattern of appending a benediction of God at the end of prayers. Certainly, there is nothing unbiblical about the closing doxology. On the contrary, it is profoundly biblical and fitting. And sentiments like it litter the whole of Scripture.

We saw one, from 1 Chronicles 29, in our call to worship. Where David says: Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.

In fact, thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, is but a condensed version of what David prays there. *And the doxology beautifully ties back to the beginning of the prayer, to the theme of God's glory (his name) and his kingdom.* It reminds us that all of these petitions, offered in our impotence and frailty, depend utterly on the divine power. The power by which, at the appearance of Christ, all things shall be subjected to God. We are praying for things here that we have no capacity to bring to pass. Things which are the leading edge of, and which ultimately issue in, a new creation. A new creation in which righteousness dwells, and in which the glory of the Lord covers the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

In short, the doxology reminds us that the prayer is about God and his glory. That God himself, and the enjoyment of God, is our chief end. And that the highest form of prayer is praise. Doxology. That even our needs: bread, pardon, and rescue, are ordered to the end that we might join the heavenly throng, saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

To our Father in heaven, the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

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