

The Lord's Prayer: Deliver Us from the Evil One

A pastor parked his car in a no-parking zone in a large city because he was short of time and couldn't find a space with a metre.

Then he put a note under the windshield wiper that read: "I have circled the block ten times. If I don't park here, I'll miss my appointment. Forgive us our trespasses."

When he returned, he found a ticket from a police officer along with this note: "I've circled this block for 10 years. If I don't give you a ticket I'll lose my job. Lead us not into temptation."

Matthew 6:9-13

In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This is the fifth message in this series on the Lord's Prayer, and I've entitled this message Deliver Us from the Evil One.

Let's just do a little recap first.

This prayer is a template for praying.

It was never meant to be merely recited.

But to be used as a pattern for our praying.

We've seen that prayer is based on relationship with God as Father / Dad.

An intimate relationship of love and obedience.

Based on that relationship, we are to pray for God's rulership of love to be implemented everywhere.

The next three phrases involves each of the persons of the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We've seen that we are to pray for our daily bread, our various needs; from physical to spiritual.

This is the special domain of God the Father (first Person of the Godhead) as He is the provider.

Jesus implied this when He said that the Father knows our needs.

We also discovered that we are to forgive others if we want God to forgive us.

If we forgive, then we can expect to fully partake of what Jesus (second Person of the Godhead) did on the cross for us and receive complete forgiveness.

In this message, we continue on and pray for something that is in the domain of the Holy Spirit (third Person of the Godhead)

More on this later.

So this is how this prayer continues: And do not lead us into temptation...

This is a rather strange way of wording it.

Because it sounds like we're praying for God not to lead us into temptation.

And if we don't pray this, does that mean that God will lead us into temptation?

James 1:13

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.

God is not in the business of trying to get people to sin.

So there’s something we’re missing if we take it to mean that.

So what’s the solution?

The solution is what’s called a litotes.

Oxford Dictionary: ironic understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of its contrary.

I know, that really helped a lot.

I’ll give you some examples and you’ll get what this means.

I won’t be sorry to see him go means I’ll be glad to see him go.

She’s no spring chicken equals she’s old.

He’s not the friendliest person equals he’s unfriendly.

In fact, when I said, “That really helped a lot,” I was using a litotes.

Because what I really meant was that the dictionary definition probably didn’t help you at all.

So when Jesus taught us to pray, “Do not lead us into temptation,”

The intention is: lead us away from temptation.

So why pray this prayer?

Let’s look at two sources of temptation.

1. Temptation comes from within

James 1:13-15

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

Notice what James says here:

James 1:14

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

The biggest source of temptation come from our own natural desires.

Physical desires: food, sex, to drink.

The temptation is for those to be turned into gluttony, immorality, alcoholism.

Think of the desire for respect, success, money, to achieve.

These desires aren’t wrong in themselves.

But temptation comes in to make them something they ought not to be.

The desire for money is a good example; we need money to live.

How easy is it for that valid desire for money to morph into the love of money.

Because temptation begins with our natural desires, it means that we ourselves are responsible for our sin if we choose to yield.

But so much in our world works towards trying to get us to yield to sin.

Listen to this quote from a famous author.

Poster after poster, film after film, novel after novel, associate the idea of sexual indulgence with the ideas of health, normality, youth, frankness, and good humour. Now this association is a lie. Like all powerful lies, it is based on a truth – the truth, acknowledged above, that sex in itself (apart from the excesses and obsessions that have grown round it) is “normal” and “healthy,” and all the rest of it. The lie consists of the suggestion that any sexual act to which you are tempted at the moment is also healthy and normal. Now this, on any conceivable view, and quite apart from Christianity, must be nonsense.

That could have been written last week.

But it was written by C.S. Lewis in his book *Mere Christianity* in 1952, almost seventy years ago.

Nothing’s changed, has it?

Because temptation starts with our natural desires, we need to be careful not to put ourselves in a position to be tempted.

A man was trying to lose weight and decided that it was best if he not drive past his favourite bakery on the way to work each day.

So he took an alternative route. This worked well for some time. But one day he absentmindedly took his old route to work.

When he realised what he was doing, he thought, “This must be a sign from the Lord.” So he kept driving.

But just to make sure he wasn’t deceiving himself he said, “I’ll drive past, and if there’s a parking spot, I’ll take it as a sign from the Lord that He wants me to buy something there.”

And the funny thing was, on the eighth time around...

An amusing story.

But how many people put themselves in a position of being tempted?

And then they wonder how they ended up where they ended up.

Don’t watch stuff on TV that tempts you to sin.

Don’t go to places that tempt you to sin.

Don’t visit websites that tempt you to sin.

Listen to this.

Hebrews 12:1

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

The sin which so easily ensnares - that means we need to be on guard all the time.

2. Temptation comes from without

Temptation comes from within, but it also comes from without.

1 Peter 5:8

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

We have an enemy.

And he is always watching, probing, testing us for weaknesses.

But because a lot of temptation comes from within us, from our own desires, he doesn't have to work extra hard.

We spent a month visiting friends who were missionaries on Bougainville Is.

They lived a long way from civilisation, right out in the middle of the jungle.

A house made out of banana leaves, no plumbing, electricity, modern conveniences.

They had nothing of value.

So to train their toddler to respect boundaries, they got a piece of driftwood.

They placed it on their coffee table and said, "Don't touch."

What do you think was the one thing in their house that little girl wanted to touch?

The devil didn't need to be on her shoulder saying, "Do it, do it, do it."

It's in her nature.

Have you ever had someone say to you, "Now you be good?"

Sometimes I reply, "I'll do my best, but I'm fighting nature."

I'm only joking, but there's a lot of truth in that.

Because when the devil is at work, he is so often assisted by our natural desires.

He even thought this would be the case when he tempted Jesus, the Son of God.

After Jesus was baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit, He fasted in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights.

And it was there that the devil tempted Him.

Now after fasting for that length of time, Jesus was probably a bit hungry.

So what was the first temptation that the devil brought to Jesus?

Matthew 4:3

Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

The devil assumed that the best place to start would be by trying to use Jesus' natural desire against Him.

So what is our defence?

3. Our best defence

What can we do?

If we're fighting against nature, plus fighting an invisible enemy, how can we protect ourselves?

Let's see what this prayer is about.

First, we are to pray to be led away from temptation.

This is where the Holy Spirit comes in.

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

If you want to be led away from temptation, it's the Holy Spirit who's going to do it.

This underscores our utter reliance on God for everything.

The prerequisite for this is total submission to God.

And you will succeed in this - resisting temptation - to the level of your yieldedness to God.

Let me explain this using a parable I heard from German evangelist Reinhard Bonnke.

A man had a 2-storey house. He heard a knocking, opened the door, and found Jesus there, so he invited Him to live in the house and gave Him a room in the top floor.

Jesus will only take what you give Him. The man was sleeping and heard a pounding on the door, opened the door a crack and the devil barged in.

He had a terrible fight, trying to resist the devil and his temptations, yelling out for help all the time. Eventually, he managed to throw the devil out.

In the morning, he said, "Why didn't you help me last night? Couldn't you hear me calling for help?"

Jesus: "The problem is, you've got this whole big house to yourself, and I've only got one room."

Man: "Ah, I see your point. You can have the whole top floor, and I'll keep the bottom floor."

The man was sleeping and heard a pounding on the door, opened the door a crack and the devil barged in again.

He had another terrible fight, trying to resist the devil and his temptations, yelling out for help all the time. Eventually, he managed to throw the devil out.

In the morning, he said, "Why didn't you help me last night? Couldn't you hear me calling for help?"

Jesus: "The problem is, I have the top floor, but you still have the bottom floor to yourself."

Man: "Ah, I see what you mean. From now on, the whole house is yours."

That night, the man was asleep, and there was a pounding at the door again.

This time Jesus went to the door, opened it wide, and stood in the doorway.

The devil looked at Him, bowed very low and said, "I'm sorry, but I think I knocked on the wrong door."

Friend, you will only succeed in dealing with temptation to the level of your yieldedness to the Holy Spirit.

So this part of the prayer: lead us from temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Doesn't that prayer make sense now?

Because this is not just a prayer for help, but an expression of reliance on the Holy Spirit.

And it implies a commitment to total yieldedness to the Holy Spirit and Christ's commands.

Are you willing to make that commitment right now?