

This morning I am in the final week of a sermon series on the Lord's Prayer entitled "Lord, teach us to pray." Next week we will have a summary and testimony time. This title comes from Luke 11:1:

***Luke 11:1** - One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

Evidently there was something about how Jesus prayed that piqued the disciples' curiosity and led them to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. In response, Jesus taught them what has come to be known as the Lord's prayer. This morning, I want to read Matthew 6:5-13 again, and then focus on the last part, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

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.'

Jesus has told us to **begin with God**. We approach Him with a balance of intimacy and reverence – Our Father in heaven. We begin with **His glory** – Hallowed be your name – and **His kingdom** – your kingdom come – and with **subordinating our will to His** – your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Before we get into our needs and wants, we orient ourselves to God – His character, His glory, His will, His purposes. We lay down our will and give up our control to Him, our loving and

all-powerful heavenly Father. **Do you want to have a powerful and effective prayer life? Then begin with Him!**

After we have properly oriented ourselves, then we ask for God to provide what we need – give us today our daily bread. We confess our sins, asking for forgiveness, while being mindful of anyone that we need to forgive – forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And now, we come to Him asking for protection from evil – lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one (or from evil, depending upon the translation).

In order to understand this passage, we have to answer three questions:

Who is the evil one?

How does he tempt us?

How do we fight against temptation?

1) Who is the evil one?

Known as the devil or Satan.

A created spiritual being who rebelled against God and opposes God and His people

Isaiah 14:12–15 - How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! ¹³ You said in your heart, “I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.” ¹⁵ But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit.

The devil is a fallen angel, a powerful spiritual being, but created, and limited. He is not omnipotent or omnipresent. He hates God and he hates you. His goal is to destroy what God loves. And he has many other fallen angels, demons, who want to destroy you and God’s plan as well.

1 Peter 5:8–9 - Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, standing firm in the

faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

This is no joke. Jesus ends this prayer by telling us to ask Him for protection against temptation and deliverance from the evil one because nothing can destroy your earthly life and shipwreck your eternal destination like falling into the hands of Satan.

Our adversary, who lies, slanders, and deceives in order to separate us from God.

***John 8:44** - You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Diabolos, the Greek word for devil, means liar or slanderer. The word Satan means adversary. He first shows up as the serpent in Genesis 3, deceiving Eve to disobey God and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From the beginning, he is a deceiver, a liar, who will say anything in order to convince you that God is not good, that He does not love you, and that He does not know what is best for you.

The tempter, who tries to separate us from God

***Matthew 4:3** - The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."*

***1 Thessalonians 3:5** - For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.*

You can be sure that Satan will put people and situations and decisions in your path in order to shipwreck your faith.

***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.*

A defeated enemy, who will be destroyed in the end

Hebrews 2:14–15 - Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of 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.

Satan was defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus, and will be cast down and destroyed in the end.

Revelation 20:10 - And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

It is critical to understand this – the devil has been defeated. But until his final destruction, he is still alive and wreaking havoc.

That is who our enemy is. There are two mistakes we can commit when it comes to the devil:

CS Lewis - *“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.”*

To the scientific west, believing in the devil may seem primitive. To which I would say a few things. First of all, most of the world has no problem believing in the spiritual world, so maybe we should not be so arrogant. Secondly, psychology and sociology and education don't seem to be making the world a better place. This world is not getting less evil. Perhaps we are a bit too arrogant in our view of things, and perhaps the Bible is correct.

On the contrary, some Christians attribute everything to the devil. Every cold, every stroke of misfortune. The truth is that some things are physical – you need medicine, food, or rest. Some things are psychological – you are cast down, and need lots of love and affirmation and support. Some issues could be moral – you are guilty of sin, and need repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation. And some could be demonic oppression – you need prayer.

2) How does he tempt us?

Remember, Satan is a liar, an accuser, a deceiver, and he is very crafty in his desire to separate us from God.

Two classic books on this subject were really helpful to me in understanding his strategies: Thomas Brooks - Precious Remedies against Satan's devices, and William Gurnall's Christian in Complete Armor.

Satan knows how to tempt each of us. He knows what we want, what we need, what we are vulnerable to, where we are insecure.

James 1:13-15 - 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. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

He tempts us to sin so that he can get a foothold, get his hooks in us. Remember **Ephesians 4:26-27** – “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” When we believe falsehood or when we give into temptation, we give the devil a foothold.

Seven examples of strategies Satan uses for temptation:

Present the bait and hide the hook

Satan shows the short-term pleasures but hides the long-term misery.

“Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap.” Klyne Snodgrass

It will feel so good – the flirtation, the attention, the drink, the drug, the purchase, the yelling, the laziness, the show, the ice cream. But it will lead to long-term pain. You will reap what you have sown.

Tell you that God is all mercy, no holiness

Go ahead, you can sin. God will forgive – that's what he does. That's what he has to do. No concept of the holiness of God, of the consequences of sin.

Tell you that sin is not a big deal, and that repentance is easy

Don't make a big deal of it. You'll do it, then repent, and it will be in the past as if nothing happened. Doesn't tell you that sin hardens your heart.

Hebrews 3:12-13 - *See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

It reminds me of a conversation Philip Yancey had with a friend who was going to leave his wife for another woman, and who believed that it would be all right, that God would forgive him. This is what Philip said in response (as recorded in his book *What's so Amazing about Grace?*):

*“Can God forgive you? Of course. You know the Bible. God uses murderers and adulterers. For goodness' sake, a couple of scoundrels named Peter and Paul led the New Testament church. Forgiveness is **our** problem, not God's. What we have to go through to commit sin distances us from God – we change in the very act of rebellion – and there is no guarantee we will ever come back. You ask me about forgiveness now, but will you even want it later, especially if it involves repentance?”*

Tell you that you've suffered enough, so you deserve what you want

Make them bitter over suffering. I've suffered, so I deserve this. Or: I've just won a great victory and sacrificed so much, so I can take it easy and let my guard down.

Convince you that holiness is not worth it

Show Christians how many bad people seem to be having great lives. Playing by the rules doesn't pay off. Holiness is not worth it.

Get you to compare one part of your life to another

I'm very good over here, so it's okay that I do that.

Convince you that you don't need God

Self-reliance. Jesus instructs us to ask the Father to deliver us and protect us. But so often we live prayerless lives and forsake living in humble dependence upon God, thinking that we can get by on our own talents. Let Jesus' prayer be a wake-

up call. You are no match for Satan, and if you are living a prayerless life in your own power, he has you exactly where he wants you.

3) How do we fight against temptation?

Paul tells us:

1 Corinthians 10:12–13 - So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. 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 endure it.

There is always a way out. He will deliver you if you will let Him. Paul gives us the most thorough instruction in Ephesians 6:

Ephesians 6:10–13 - 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.

Notice that Paul doesn't tell us to "win the victory" but to stand. **Jesus already won the victory!** Jesus defeated the devil when he died and rose again! He has given us His Holy Spirit. So be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power, and put on the armor of God. Here is the armor of God:

Belt of truth – ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,

This refers to leather underwear, like an apron, that gathers the tunic together and holds the sword. It ensures that the soldier is unimpeded while marching. Truth is our foundation. Truth is not just how I feel but the revelation of God in Christ and in Scripture. **Truth dispels lies** and sets us free. **You are a beloved child of God. You are perfect in His sight. There is a plan for your future. God is good, and sovereign. His mercies are new every morning.** **When tempted**, I remember the truth. God loves me. God knows what is best for me. Sin destroys. Satan is a liar. **When I am accused**, I remember who I am in Christ, and that what Satan accuses me of has been nailed to the cross.

Breastplate of righteousness

with the breastplate of righteousness in place

The breastplate protects front and back, most importantly our heart. **A right relationship with God is our protection.** Both the imputed righteousness that comes from being in Christ, and our own personal holiness. Righteousness helps us resist temptation and accusation. We have His righteousness, and we walk in it.

Unrighteousness gives the devil a foothold. And where we have unrighteousness, we need to confess and get right.

James 4:7 - Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Feet fitted with readiness

, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

The Roman boots (caliga) were leather, toes free, heavy studded soles, tied to ankles and shins with straps. Equipped for long marches and solid stance, preventing the foot from sliding. We are standing firm in the gospel, protecting us from his accusations and temptations.

Shield of faith

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.

The shield was a large, 2 foot by 4 foot defense. When Roman soldiers advanced in a phalanx it was hard to defeat them. We trust in God, believe what He has said about us and who He is. We believe His promises.

Helmet of salvation

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation

Heavy helmet that could only be pierced by an axe. God's saving power protects our mind. We are saved by grace through faith for good works. We are beloved

children of God. We are saints. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, to think of yourself according to the gospel.

Sword of the Spirit

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Short dagger for hand-to-hand combat. The word of God. In Greek, Rhema – a saying. This means applying God’s word to your specific situation, **like Jesus answering the devil in the wilderness by saying “It is written.”** Shows the importance of Bible memorization.

The armor of God is not something we just put on. We know and believe the truth and that gives us a foundation. We trust in the gospel and it gives us a firm place to stand. We grasp our salvation and it protects our mind. We walk in righteousness and our heart is protected. We know and speak the Word of God and we win the battle.

Pray in the Spirit –

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

All times – not just in times of need, but also in victory and in seasons of peace. Don’t ever let your guard down.

All kinds - ACTS – Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication

All perseverance - The struggle never ends, so continue to rely on God for His power and pray for His help and victory

Do not fight these battles alone. Fight 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 person is powerful and effective.*

There is an enemy who wants to destroy you. He prowls around like a roaring lion. But there is a Savior who has defeated him, and whose power is available to you by His Holy Spirit. Submit your will to His today and the devil will flee from you.

James 4:7 - Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.