

THE LORD'S PRAYER — WEEK 7: PROTECTION

Series: The Lord's Prayer | Final Message | Matthew 6:9–13 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION

Church, for seven weeks we have been learning that Jesus didn't just give us words to pray; He gave us a way to live. We began with our Father in heaven, and every petition has been drawing us away from self-reliance and toward the heart of God. We have prayed about His name, His kingdom, His provision, His forgiveness, and His guidance. And now Jesus ends this prayer by teaching us to ask for protection. Isn't that interesting? He doesn't end by telling us how strong we are. He ends by reminding us how much we need our Father.

Think about the way we protect the things we value. We lock our doors. We put passwords on our phones. We teach our children to look both ways before crossing the street. We make plans because we know there are dangers we can see and dangers we cannot. But some of the greatest battles in life cannot be solved with another lock, another password, or a better plan. There are lies that settle into our thinking, temptations that wear down our resistance, bitterness that takes root in relationships, and fears that make us forget who God is. Jesus knows the world we live in, and He knows the Father we can call upon

Here's the funny thing about security: we can remember every password and still forget to pray. We can secure our homes and neglect the condition of our hearts. Those precautions are wise, but they cannot guard us from pride, bitterness, deception, or the slow drift away from Jesus. That is why this prayer matters in ordinary life.

Today I don't want to give the enemy more attention than he deserves. This is not a sermon to make us suspicious of every difficulty or afraid of every shadow. This is a sermon to help us pray with confidence. Jesus never taught us to be fascinated with darkness. He taught us to turn toward our Father. And the last petition is a beautiful reminder that the God who invites us to ask for daily bread also invites us to ask for daily deliverance.

BIG IDEA: We can stand against evil because our victory is found in Christ

SCRIPTURE READING — MATTHEW 6:9–13 (NIV)

"This, then, is how you should 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 today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

Before we go any further, notice the little word that holds this prayer together: us. Give us. Forgive us. Lead us. Deliver us. Jesus is not training isolated spiritual heroes. He is forming a praying people. We need the Father, and we need one another. This final request is not a private superstition we repeat when we feel nervous. It is the daily prayer of disciples who know that life with Jesus involves a real struggle and a faithful God.

1. THE REALITY — Evil is Real

Jesus says, 'deliver us from the evil one.' He does not ask us to pretend evil is imaginary. Scripture speaks of personal spiritual opposition, but it also speaks honestly about sin within us and the pressures of a fallen

world around us. Not every inconvenience is a demonic attack. Not every hard season is evidence that someone has put a target on your back. We need discernment, not drama. But we also need to stop acting as though the only things that matter are the things we can measure and manage.

Ephesians 6:11–12 (NIV): Paul calls believers to put on the full armor of God and reminds us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

I love that Paul begins by correcting our target. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. That person who frustrated you this week is not your ultimate enemy. Your spouse is not your enemy. The person who voted differently from you is not your enemy. The neighbor who has not yet met Jesus is not your enemy. The church down the street is not your enemy. We cannot claim to be fighting spiritual battles while treating people made in God's image as though they are the problem. The enemy would love for the church to spend its strength fighting one another instead of loving one another.

1 Peter 5:8–9 (NIV): Peter urges believers to be alert and sober-minded, resist the devil, and stand firm in the faith.

Peter gives us two instructions that belong together: be alert and resist. Alertness is not anxiety. It is spiritual attentiveness. It means paying attention when pride starts sounding like confidence, when resentment starts sounding like justice, or when compromise starts sounding like freedom. The enemy does not always announce himself with something spectacular. Sometimes the lie is simply, 'You can handle this without prayer.' Sometimes it is, 'You do not need to forgive.' Sometimes it is, 'Nobody will ever know.'

Notice the setting of the Lord's Prayer. Jesus has just warned against performing spirituality to impress people, and He goes on to speak about forgiveness, treasure, and divided loyalties. Evil is not only something 'out there.' The battle can touch our motives, desires, relationships, and worship. We need more than religious language; we need hearts surrendered to God.

Think about Peter. In Luke 22:31–32, Jesus tells him that Satan has asked to sift the disciples like wheat. But listen to what Jesus says next: 'I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.' Peter would stumble badly, but his failure would not be the end of his story. Jesus was already interceding for him, and after the resurrection Jesus restored him and entrusted him with caring for His sheep in John 21. The enemy wanted to sift Peter; Jesus was committed to restoring him. That is a picture of spiritual warfare centered not on fascination with Satan, but on the faithful love of our Savior..

Here is the pastoral balance: do not minimize evil, and do not magnify it. The enemy is real, but he is not God's equal. Scripture is honest about darkness, but its center is Jesus. We do not need to make darkness the main character of our story.

2. OUR NEED — God's Protection

The prayer does not say, 'Father, watch me prove how strong I am.' It says, 'Deliver us.' Those two words are an admission of need. Spiritual maturity is not outgrowing dependence on God; it is growing deeper in it. The strongest disciple is not the one who never asks for help, but the one who knows where help comes from.

Psalms 121:7–8 (NIV): The Lord watches over His people and their coming and going, now and forevermore.

Psalm 121 is a song for travelers. People walked roads where they could not control every danger ahead. The psalmist lifts his eyes and asks where his help comes from, and the answer is the Maker of heaven and earth. What a picture of prayer! We do not have to know every danger in order to know the One who keeps us. Our security is not rooted in perfect foresight. It is rooted in the faithfulness of God.

God's protection does not mean Christians never suffer. Jesus faced temptation. The apostles endured persecution. Faithful people still walk through valleys. Psalm 121 is not permission to promise that nothing painful will happen; it is an invitation to trust the Keeper of our lives.

John 17:15 (NIV): Jesus prays not that the Father take His disciples out of the world, but that He protect them from the evil one.

Listen to Jesus praying for His disciples in John 17. He does not ask the Father to remove them from the world. He asks the Father to protect them while they remain in it. That matters for our church. We are called to love our neighborhoods, move toward people who are hurting, and bear witness to the gospel. We don't pray for protection so we can avoid the world; we pray for protection so we can faithfully love the world.

Last week, when we talked about guidance, we remembered that God does not tempt us to evil. The wording 'lead us not into temptation' is not an accusation against the Father's goodness. It is a humble plea that He guide us away from situations where we would fall and keep us faithful when testing comes. Today's petition continues that same thought: Father, guard our steps, strengthen our faith, and rescue us from the evil one. Guidance and protection belong together.

And how does God often answer? Through His Word that exposes lies. Through His Spirit who convicts and comforts. Through prayer that reorients our hearts. Through brothers and sisters who speak truth in love. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do this week is tell a trusted believer, 'I'm struggling, and I need you to pray with me.' The Lord's Prayer says 'us' because God never intended us to walk alone.

Imagine someone carrying a struggle for months. Every Sunday they smile and say they are fine, but they are afraid to tell anyone the truth. Finally they tell a trusted friend, 'I need help.' The struggle may not vanish that afternoon, but secrecy loses some of its power, and someone begins to pray and walk alongside them. This is an imagined example, but the invitation is real: sometimes protection looks like the courage to stop pretending.

So be watchful without becoming fearful. Pray, establish wise boundaries, confess sin quickly, and seek help when you need it. Those are not signs that faith has failed. They are ways we respond to the grace of God.

3. GOD'S ANSWER — God Delivers

Now we arrive at the heart of the petition. The Greek verb behind 'deliver,' *rhysai* (HROO-sai), expresses rescue from danger. Jesus teaches us to call upon the Father to act. We have named the reality of evil and admitted our need for protection. Now we look to the God who rescues.

Psalm 34:17-19 (NIV): The Lord hears the cries of the righteous, is close to the brokenhearted, and delivers them from their troubles.

Psalm 34 is wonderfully honest. The righteous may have many troubles, and the Lord hears their cries. Some of us have been praying and the situation has not changed. The promise is not that every trouble disappears on our timetable. Deliverance is not always the absence of a battle; sometimes it is God's faithfulness in the middle of one. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, even before the circumstances change.

2 Timothy 4:18 (NIV): Paul expresses confidence that the Lord will rescue him from every evil attack and bring him safely into His heavenly kingdom.

Paul knew hardship and was nearing the end of his earthly ministry. Yet he trusted that the Lord would bring him safely into His heavenly kingdom. His hope was deeper than 'nothing bad will ever happen to me.' It was the assurance that evil would not have the final word.

Just a few verses earlier, in 2 Timothy 4:16–17, Paul says no one came to his support at his first defense, but the Lord stood at his side and gave him strength. People left, but the Lord stayed. When Paul speaks of rescue, he is not denying suffering; he is locating his security in the presence and promise of Christ.

And that brings us to the gospel. If protection only means 'nothing difficult will happen,' what do we say to a faithful believer who suffers? Jesus entered our broken world, faced temptation without sin, and endured the cross. Church, do you know how Jesus beat the devil? With a big, ugly stick! We call it the CROSS! Now the wood itself had no magical power. It was Jesus' obedient, sacrificial death and resurrection that secured our victory. Colossians 2:14–15 says Christ canceled our debt and triumphed over the powers and authorities through the cross. What the enemy thought would be the instrument of Christ's defeat became the place of His triumph. The enemy thought the cross would

be the end of Jesus. Instead, it was the beginning of the end for the enemy

Remember Gethsemane. Jesus tells His disciples to watch and pray so they will not fall into temptation (Matthew 26:41), and He entrusts Himself to the Father. The One who taught us to pray in testing prayed in His own hour of anguish. He did not avoid the cross; He obeyed the Father through it. Our confidence in deliverance begins with His faithfulness, not ours.

Colossians 1:13–14 (NIV): In Christ, God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption and forgiveness.

Colossians 1:13–14 tells us that God has already rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His Son. Yet we still pray, 'Deliver us.' That is the already and not yet of Christian hope: Christ has won the decisive victory, and we still await the day when every effect of evil is finally removed. Romans 8:38–39 reminds us that no power can separate us from God's love in Christ. We don't fight to earn Christ's victory. We stand in the victory Christ has already won. And here is the beautiful arc of Scripture: the devil isn't in the first chapter of the Bible, and he isn't in the last! Genesis 1 begins with God's good creation. By Revelation 22, the curse is gone, and God and the Lamb reign. Evil may interrupt the story, but it doesn't get to finish it!

This is where our Wesleyan understanding of grace matters. God's grace does not simply pardon us and leave us unchanged. The Spirit forms holy love in us. He gives us power to say no to sin and yes to Jesus. Holiness is not a performance to impress God; it is the fruit of belonging to Him. We cooperate with the grace that goes before us,

awakens us, forgives us, and transforms us. We do not save ourselves. We respond to the Savior who is at work in us.

So what does God's deliverance look like in ordinary life? Sometimes it looks like a confession that breaks secrecy. Sometimes it looks like a phone call before you make a destructive decision. Sometimes it looks like choosing forgiveness when bitterness would be easier. Sometimes it looks like saying, 'Lord, I cannot do this on my own.' And sometimes it looks like faithful endurance while we wait for the day when Christ makes all things new. Every one of those moments can become a testimony: our Father has not abandoned His children.

CHALLENGE: Don't live afraid of the enemy; live dependent on the victory of Jesus.

As we close this series, ask yourself: Where am I trying to fight a spiritual battle in my own strength? Where do I need to confess, ask for prayer, establish a boundary, or trust the Father while I wait? Don't leave today simply admiring the idea of deliverance. Bring your actual need to the God who delivers.

Look at the journey this prayer has taken us on. We begin by saying, 'Our Father.' We lift up His name. We surrender to His kingdom and will. We ask for bread because we depend on His provision. We ask for forgiveness because we depend on His mercy. We ask for guidance because we depend on His wisdom. And we ask for deliverance because we depend on His power. From beginning to end, the Lord's Prayer is not about building our confidence in ourselves. It is about learning to live as children who trust their Father.

RESPONSE — ALTAR INVITATION

I want to invite us into a moment of honest prayer. Not a moment of fear. Not a moment of shame. A moment of surrender. If there is a temptation you have been hiding, bring it into the light. If there is a fear that has been controlling you, bring it to the Father. If there is a battle you have been trying to win by yourself, let this be the moment you ask for help. Our prayer team is here to pray with you, not to judge you. There is no need to name details publicly. You can simply say, 'I need God's protection,' or 'I need prayer to stand faithful.'

And if you are here today and you have never placed your trust in Jesus, the invitation is not to learn a religious formula. It is to receive the grace of the Savior who died and rose again. Turn toward Him. Ask Him to forgive you, make you new, and lead your life. The Father who teaches us to pray is the Father who welcomes us through His Son.

Church, as we respond, I want us to pray the final petition together, slowly and sincerely: 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' Let that prayer be more than something we say on Sunday. Let it become a way we live on Monday, when decisions are difficult and the path ahead is unclear.

TRINITARIAN BLESSING

May the Father, who hears the cries of His children, guard your hearts and keep you in His love. May Jesus Christ, who conquered sin and death through His cross and resurrection, strengthen your faith and assure you of His victory. And may the Holy Spirit fill you with holy love, give you discernment in every battle, and empower you to walk faithfully in the world God has called you to serve. Go in the grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

