

## The Lord's Prayer: Deliverance from Evil

**Big Idea:** Only God can deliver us from evil within and without.

**Purpose:** To get people to look to God for deliverance.

**Passage:** Matthew 6:9b-13                      **Verse:** Matthew 6:13

### Opening

#### Story

-Have you ever come face to face with evil?

Many years ago, I led a team of high school students and adult leaders on a missions trip to the Navaho Reservation in Arizona. We were working with a church on the reservation and helping them with some work projects. We also did some camps for kids. In prepping for the trip, we learned that work on the Navaho Reservation, especially Jesus-centered work, was often met with significant spiritual resistance. We had no idea how accurate that was.

-Our week went smoothly until our final night. I was awakened from a deep sleep by my wife who was shaking me awake. I was surprised to see her because the guys and the girls were sleeping in separate buildings. Her very presence indicated something was up. She looked at me with fear in her eyes and said, "*Why are sleeping? Don't you know what is happening?*" I shot out of my sleeping bag with alarm and discovered our team was in the midst of a massive spiritual attack.

-The sister of the pastor of the church we were helping showed up unannounced with her two children. She was mixed up in some type of evil. She entered into the buildings where we were sleeping and began to pray evil incantations over our students and leaders. She even prayed while holding them down. Some students and leaders awoke confused. Some went into trancelike postures and were just wandering around the grounds.

-When I awoke, I instantly could sense that we were face-to-face with evil. You could literally feel it in the air. The hairs on the back on my neck were standing up.

I knew we had to do two things. First, we needed to turn on the lights because it was pitch black. Second, we needed to pray in the name of Jesus over every student and adult who was being affected. I gathered our most mature leaders. We quickly huddled. I gave them directions on how to pray and we went into action. We spent the next few hours praying over our team. At one point the local pastor heard what had happened. He emerged from his home and rebuked his sister in the name of Jesus. I still remember what he said. He told her that, as the pastor, he had spiritual authority over the land and he sent her on her way.

-To this day, that night was one of the more bizarre and otherworldly experiences I have ever had. I had studied evil in seminary. I had given talks on evil from the Bible. But until that night, I had never experienced it in such vivid detail. Needless to say, it provoked

some incredible conversations with our students. We had their full attention. In a world filled with evil, how do we pray? Jesus tells us exactly how to pray.

### Review/series

-We are in the 4<sup>th</sup> week of a series on the Lord's Prayer called ***Learning to Pray***. Most of us have no clue how to pray, so Jesus teaches us to pray. Jesus' prayer is a model for us. It provides catalysts for our prayers. It also provides guardrails. Jesus' prayer consists of six petitions. We have covered the first five petitions in previous weeks. Today we will consider the final petition which is also the most misunderstood petition.

Next week, I will have the privilege of interviewing Dr. Nijay Gupta and Dr. Wesley Hill. Both of these Biblical scholars have written commentaries on the Lord's Prayer. I am going to try to get them to fight. (Just kidding.) We will dive deep into the Lord's Prayer with these experts and also learn how they incorporate the Lord's Prayer into their own lives. We have been challenging you to memorize the Lord's Prayer and pray it once a day. Kris will be reciting it for us. Feel free to pray along with her.

*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.*

*For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.*

*Amen (Matthew 6:9b-13)*

### Lead us not into temptation...

#### **Does God tempt us to sin?**

-Let's dive right into the first half of our final petition. The NIV reads *lead us not into temptation*. Pope Francis recently made headlines by saying it was time to change how we translate the wording of this petition. He said that it suggested that God is one the induces temptation. He correctly noted that God is not the one who pushes us into temptation. That is the role of the devil. He's got a point.

-*Lead us not into temptation* is the statement from the Lord's Prayer that is hardest to understand and most easily misunderstood. Let's unpack it a bit. When I encounter a challenging piece of Scripture I first like to ask, "*What does it not mean?*" Here is what *lead us not into temptation* does not mean.

-**It does not mean we are asking God to not tempt us to sin.** James makes this explicitly clear: *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be*

*tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;* (James 1:13) God does not tempt us to sin. God is good. He is never complicit in evil or an originator of sin in any way, shape or form.

-Second, *lead us not into temptation* does not mean we are saying to God, “*Don’t allow us to be tempted.*” God created a world with free will. God doesn’t control our decisions. God gave Adam and Eve a choice. God gives us a choice. We live in a world where temptations are possible. The petition can’t possibly mean we are asking God to create a path for us where we are not tempted. God allowed His own Son to be tempted. We know what it does not mean. What **does** Jesus mean?

-It is helpful to consider the petition in light of its use in Matthew’s gospel. Matthew 4:1 reads, *Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* We can note two things. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where Jesus was tempted, not by God, but by the devil. Jesus went forty days without food and then resisted numerous attacks from the devil. Jesus held strong and emerged victorious.

Then in Matthew 26:41, we see another key usage of this word *tempted*. Jesus is in the garden praying. The cross awaits. All the forces of evil and death are gathered, hovering like vultures over that place. They are about to descend upon Jesus. Jesus tells His disciples, “*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” (Matthew 26:41) Jesus tells His disciples to pray that *they* will not face what *He* is facing—a frontal assault from the gates of hell.

-We also get a clearer understanding of the request when we consider it as a full petition: *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.* God allows Jesus to face temptations. But God is not the cause of the temptations. That’s the devil’s business. Jesus faces it down the devil but tells His disciples, who are weak in the flesh, to pray they will never have to do the same. The request is not so much for God to keep us from temptation, but to not abandon us when the Evil One attacks.

-Essentially, Jesus is teaching His disciples to pray: *God, deliver us from facing the same type of temptation that Jesus faced in the wilderness and in the garden. God, deliver us from a situation where we have to go head-to-head with the Devil because we are weak.*

-There is a present reality to this request. Most Jewish prayers in Jesus’ day requested protection and deliverance from evil temptations. The Jewish people recognized that there were evil powers at work in the world. Jesus is asking us to recognize that as well. Every day we face temptations from the evil one. We are praying that we do not fall to that temptation.

-But the writers of Scripture and the early followers of Jesus also anticipated a final test that will come in the future. This test is pictured as a mighty battle between the forces of heaven and hell. Only those who are connected to Jesus, the Lamb of God, will emerge from that final test. I believe Jesus is asking us to pray in light of daily temptations, but also in light of this final test yet to come. God, do not abandon us to temptation or evil. God do not let us fall.

## A confession of weakness

-This petition is meant to remind us that we are weak. That is what Jesus told His disciples in the garden – *pray that you don't have to face what I am facing because your flesh is weak*. This prayer is a confession of weakness.

-One of my favorite stories is of boxing great Muhammed Ali who was renowned for his skills in the ring, but also known for his confidence and bravado. Once, at the height of his fame, Muhammed Ali was traveling by plane. As they were preparing to take off, a flight attendant passed him and asked him to fasten his seat belt. Ali responded, "*Superman don't need a seatbelt.*" The flight attendant quickly replied, "*Superman don't need an airplane. Buckle up, sir.*"

-We often go into our daily lives, and into our prayer lives, with confidence and bravado. We act like we've mostly got it handled we might just need God's help for a few small things. This petition of the Lord's Prayer corrects that mindset. This is a prayer that confesses our weakness. It makes no pretense of strength. If we are left alone, we are toast. **Our hope is in God's presence and provision.**

-Recently my daughter Eden asked me if I knew about the *Footsteps in the Sand* poem. I nodded. It is a famous poem by Carolyn Carty. Eden proceeded to remind me of the contents of the poem. A man had a dream about walking on a beach with God. As he looked at scenes of his life, he was comforted to see two sets of footprints in the sand. But then he flashed forward to the end of his life. He was alarmed to look back at the hardest parts of his life and see only one set of footprints. He questioned God about this and asked why God would leave him when he needed God the most. God simply responds, "*My son, in those moments I was carrying you.*" This part of the Lord's Prayer reminds us that in the most difficult times in our lives, **we need to be carried.**

-When we pray *lead us not into temptation*, we are reminded that, apart from God, we will almost certainly fall to temptation. It is a petition that confesses our vulnerable state and turns our face to God for much needed help. That mindset is amplified when we are reminded who is behind the temptation. The second half of the petition reads *but deliver us from the evil one*.

## Deliver us from the Evil One

### **Deliver us**

-Year ago, I was white-water rafting with some students on the New River Gorge in West Virginia. It was a guided trip because the rapids on the New River Gorge are no joke. In one particularly rough rapid, our raft high-sided on a large rock which caused the raft to twist like a pretzel and toss out the people in the back of the raft. That included me. One moment I am in a raft enjoyed a joyous ride. The next moment I am in a class 4 rapid.

When I first tried to emerge from the water, I came up under the boat, which was frightening. When I next emerged, I was some distance from the raft and being thrown around the rocks and raging water like a rag doll. Then I remembered what our guide had said: "*If you get tossed, look for the raft and I will throw you a life preserver.*" Amidst my

panicking, I looked for the raft and raised up one hand as high as I could. The guide dutifully threw me a life preserver attached to a rope and hauled me to safety. The students thought it was funny. But it was no joke. I absolutely needed to be rescued. I needed to be delivered.

-This word *deliver* magnifies the state of our helplessness apart from God. The word literally means *to rescue*. But Jesus' words *deliver us* suggest more than being rescued from a raging rapid. They suggest **enslavement**. The Scriptures use that analogy to describe our state apart from God's intervention. Due to our sin and the sin around us, we are enslaved. When we pray *deliver us*, we are reminded of our enslavement apart from God's liberating intervention.

-Jesus' first followers were mostly Jewish, and the words *deliver us* would have undoubtedly reminded them of the 400 years the Jewish people were enslaved in Egypt. They would also be reminded that God liberated them and set them free. Matthew cast Jesus' ministry as a *new exodus* event. After God set His people free, their disobedience led them to spend 40 years in the wilderness. We are told how, when they finally arrived in the Promised Land, they were repeatedly seduced by hostile demonic forces and false gods and entered spiritual enslavement. Jesus' forty days of testing in the wilderness mirror the forty years God's people spent in the wilderness. But this time, Jesus emerges victorious. Our flesh is weak. His is not. Jesus is leading a second exodus; an exodus that will forever deliver us.

- Apart from Jesus, we exist, like God's people of old, in a spiritual enslavement. Paul tells the Romans that *in their former lives they were slaves to sin*. Paul tells the Colossians that *apart from Jesus, they were enslaved in a dominion of darkness*. With this context, the prayer *deliver us* takes on new gravity and power. There is much at stake. But what are we praying to be delivered from? We are praying to be delivered from the Evil One.

## Evil/The Evil One

-There is some debate over whether we should pray to be delivered from *evil* or to be delivered from the **evil one**. The Greek word can be used both ways. I feel pretty confident that Jesus is asking us to pray ***deliver us from the Evil One***. We have already discussed this petition's connection to Jesus' own temptation in the wilderness. In that instance, **Jesus is not just being tempted by evil but by the Evil One**. And, throughout his gospel, Matthew consistently uses this term to refer to someone who is the personification of evil. An example is the parable where Jesus says, *The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil*. (Matthew 13:38b-39a)

### -Who is the Evil One?

I want to take a few minutes to sketch the Biblical portrait of the Evil One. We have lots of misconceptions about the Evil One. At some point we will do a series on the supernatural world, but for today, what does the Bible tell us about the Evil One?

- In the opening pages of the Biblical story, we see this personification of evil appear in the form of a serpent. What is the serpent trying to do? Tempt Adam and Eve. After that

we don't see many references to this Evil One in the Old Testament. There are some passages that give us bits and pieces of information, but the sketch remains partial and faintly drawn. Just a warning—the Hebrew word **satan** is often not referring to the Evil One, but simply to someone who serves in an adversarial role.

-In the New Testament the portrait of the Evil One begins to get filled in. There are four primary names used for the Evil One in the New Testament.

### Names for the Evil One:

1. **Satan**: who has a kingdom (Matthew 12:26)
2. **Devil**: a slanderer; adversary of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11)
3. **Beelzebub**: prince of demons (Matthew 12:24)
4. **Evil One**: mentioned 12x in Matthew (Matthew 5:37)

### Other Descriptions of the Evil One:

1. **The Tempter** (Matthew 4:3)
2. **Father of Lies** (John 8:44)
3. **Disguised as an Angel of Light** (2 Corinthians 11:14)
4. **The Enemy** (Matthew 13:39)
5. **Ruler of this World** (John 12:21)
6. **Prince of the Power of the Air** (Ephesians 2:2)
7. **God of this World** (2 Corinthians 4:4)

-The writers of the New Testament present the Evil One as the main adversary of Jesus. The Evil One is portrayed as the anti-Jesus or anti-Christ. In Luke's gospel, Jesus proclaims that he saw *Satan falling like lightning from heaven*. This is Jesus announcing that His Kingdom coming would destroy the kingdom of the Evil One. We follow this epic struggle between good and evil all the way to the final pages of Scripture where Jesus defeats and forever banishes the Evil One.

-But until that time, the Evil One and the evil spirits who follow the Evil One are incredibly destructive and dangerous. As I lead this church, I think continually of Peter's warning to his church, *Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*. (1 Peter 5:8) Or, I think of Jesus' own words, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy*; (John 10:10a)

-Last week Mike referenced the Rwandan Civil War where almost a million of the Tutsi community were brutally slaughtered in 100 days. When Canadian general Romeo Dallaire arrived as commander of the UN Assistance Mission to seek a ceasefire, he witnessed the bloodshed of the 100-day massacre and said, *In Rwanda I shook hands with the devil. I have seen him, I have smelled him, and I have touched him*. We are praying to be delivered from that.

## Big idea

### There is evil within

-When we pray *lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the Evil One*, we are meant to remember that there is evil within. As Jesus said, *our flesh is weak*. All of us are affected by sin. Author G.K. Chesterton once noted that *the reality of sin in our heart is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved*. It is on full display every day. It certainly is in my life.

-Later in Matthew, Jesus says that the things *that defile us come out of our heart*. The Apostle Paul confessed,

*So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.* (Romans 7:21-23)

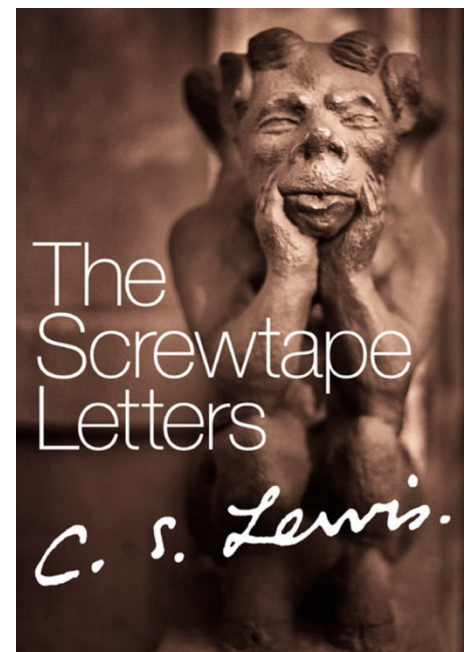
There is evil within.

### There is evil without

-But this petition also reminds us that there is evil without. The earliest followers of Jesus needed no convincing of this. The Greco-Roman world was full of gods of all shapes and sizes. In those days, it was hard to find an atheist. Most people believed in a supernatural world that intersected with the natural world. It was common for ancient people to seek the help of gods to protect them from evil. We have archaeological evidence that suggests that early followers of Jesus carried scraps of paper with this last line of the Lord's Prayer around with them in their pockets. Early followers of Jesus believed their God could truly deliver them from evil and this scrap of paper was a reminder. But we modern people don't think much about the supernatural realm. We might go days or even months not giving much consideration to the reality of the Evil One trying to wreck our lives and our world.

-One of my favorite C.S. Lewis books is called *The Screwtape Letters*. I read it as a middle-schooler. If you have never read *The Screwtape Letters* then as your pastor I officially assign you to read it as a follow up to this message. In this short book, Lewis imagines a conversation between a senior demon named Screwtape and his apprentice named Wormwood. In the preface of the book, Lewis gives us some sage advice:

*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. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.* (C.S. Lewis)



-I think Lewis is spot on. We can either *overestimate* the power of the Evil One or *underestimate* the power of the Evil One. We overestimate the power of the Evil One when we live in fear of his attacks. Jesus defeated the Evil One on the cross. As long as we stay connected to Jesus, we don't need to fear anything. But I am guessing most of us don't overestimate the power of the Evil One.

-I am guessing most of us underestimate the power of the Evil One. Although the war is won, the battle is still being waged. Scripture is clear that we are part of an ongoing spiritual battle. Our enemy is strong and clever and bent on trying to destroy anyone and everyone who follows Jesus. Paul says it clearly to the Ephesian church,

*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.* (Ephesians 6:12)

-When we minimize or ignore the Evil One, we do so at our own peril. It is exactly what the Evil One wants us to do. Here is a short excerpt of one of Screwtape's letters to Wormwood where he encourages him to hide the reality of his existence:

*My Dear Wormwood, I do not think you will have much difficulty in keeping the patient in the dark. The fact that "devils" are predominantly comic figures in the modern imagination will help you. If any faint suspicion of your existence begins to arise in his mind, suggest to him a picture of something in red tights, and persuade him that since he cannot believe in that he therefore cannot believe in you.* (*The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis)

-When we picture the Devil as a figure in a red onesie that has horns and a tail, we are missing the point. When the only thing we attribute to the Devil is a decadent dessert, we are living dangerously and foolishly. The power of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil that Paul warned us about are evident everywhere we look. They were at work in Rwanda. They were at work in Nazi Germany. They are at work on the steps of our Capitol. We see people behave a certain way and we think *those people have lost their minds*. There is more going on than meets the eye. We must not grow sleepy like Jesus' disciples in the garden. We must be alert. We must watch and pray for there is evil within and evil without.

**Only God can deliver us from the evil within and without.**

-Eugene Peterson translates our petition as "*keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil.*" When we pray *lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil*, we are reminded that only God can deliver us from evil within and without. On the cross, Jesus did both. Because Jesus bore our sin, we don't have to. Because Jesus faced the Evil One alone, we don't have to. When we pray *lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the Evil One*, we can take heart that God can and will deliver us because *God has already delivered us in Jesus*. That's why John reminds us: *greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world*.

-When I was a kid, I read a book called *This Present Darkness*, by Frank Peretti. It was a book about a pastor who engaged the forces of evil through prayer. It effectively revealed



the truth that activity in the supernatural realm absolutely affects activity in the natural realm. It also impressed on my young heart that my simple prayers can change things. That is why that night when my wife shook me awake and we came face to face with evil, I knew we needed to pray. I remember being surprised at the chaos but I also being at peace. I was not at peace because I had the resources to go toe-to-toe with the Evil One. I was at peace because I knew Our Father did. I knew that the name of Jesus sends the evil ones running.

### **The Doxology**

-When we recite the Lord's Prayer, we normally end by saying and ***Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory. Amen.*** You might have noticed this is not in Matthew or Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. You probably have a note that says that the doxology is not included in the earliest and best manuscripts. It was likely not in Matthew's original gospel. But it was typical for Jewish people to conclude their public prayers with a doxology. The early Christians followed this model. When the early Christians prayed the Lord's Prayer publicly, they added a closing doxology from 1 Chronicles 29:11-13. It is fitting that we do the same. The doxology directs us to the Our Father who is invading earth with heaven, who gives us daily bread, who forgives our debts, who keeps us from falling and who delivers us from the Evil One, hallowed be His name.

### **Closing**

#### **The deliverance of the cross**

*-When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Colossians 2:13-15)*

-Jesus stood in our place to take care of the evil within and triumphed over Satan to take care of the evil without