



By Vincent Gannon

Scripture Matthew 6:13

Subject - Part 38: The Disciples Prayer - Prayer of Protection

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.

Our teacher, who has laid out this model prayer has been none other than The Lord Jesus Christ. We see that in its very features, Christ gives us all the ingredients that touch every area of our needs and every element of praising and glorifying God. It is without a doubt, a comprehensive masterpiece - all necessary and every part of true prayer. Before we started it, in verse 9, Jesus taught us that our prayer should never be hypocritical and never simply mechanical, nor should we pray as a pretense. He taught us that prayer should not be a vehicle to parade our supposed spirituality, and we are not to pray out of routine, ritual or as a formula. Yet, isn't it amazing that this very prayer was set out in contrast to all those kinds of prayer and yet it is used to express mechanical and hypocritical prayer. How many times have we witnessed people muttering and spluttering this prayer, without a clue or what it means, or hypocritically praying with hearts that are not right or pure before God? I think some of us can think of how many times we've done it mechanically out of ritual or routine. But even so, this prayer, the disciples' prayer that the Lord taught us is in stark contrast to mechanics and hypocrisy. We need to be careful not to fall into that category. Matthew 6:7

We have seen throughout this prayer that it exalts God. Every phrase and every petition of this prayer, from beginning to end and everything in between, focuses on God; His attributes, His person and His promises and His wonderful works. (John17:3). So to prevent this prayer from being mechanical or hypocritical we must come with our focus on God, death to self, end of mindless repetition, end of contentless and end of non-communion. Our prayer must be God-centred, not self-centred, truth centred and not mouth centred.

We must remember that true prayer is in humility expressing our absolute dependence on God. That's exactly what our Lord wants. And as we think about God and what is true about Him then our prayer before Him, brings glory to Him.

John Stott says, in summing up the thoughts I've just given you, said and I quote:

“When we come to God in a prayer we do not come hypocritically like play actors seeking the applause of men, nor do we come mechanically like pagan babblers whose mind is not in their mutterings. But thoughtfully, humbly and trustfully like little children we come to our Father and that is the essence of the prayer.”

The basic reality of this prayer is the truth about God. For until we know the truth about God, we do not really know how we can pray to God, and so we must be taught and then pray in response. Luke 11:1-13 It was the only recorded thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them.

As we have followed the Lord's teaching along the way in these verses we now come to the end. In the last verse, verse 12 which is underlined by verses 14 and 15, Jesus teaches us to seek forgiveness and to forgive, that is from past sins. Now the continuation from that verse ***“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil”*** which is deliverance from sins of the future. Not only do we need forgiveness, which we do, we need preservation, we need deliverance; this is the cry of verse 13. But before we proceed we need to understand an important issue before analysing this petition.

God does not entice us with evil. The Bible is very clear in teaching us that, see James 1:13. God is not the author of evil nor does He tempt us with evil, instead God is our Deliverer from evil. The emphasis here is on God delivering His people from evil not leading them into such.

The Greek word for temptation is *“peirasmos”*. Strangely, it is a neutral word. Having no defined meaning for good or evil in the original Greek. In our English language, temptation is understood to mean an inducement to do evil. But In Greek it can mean an inducement to do evil, but it can also mean *“trial”* or *“test”* with the view of proving something not provoking to do wrong. What James says in Chapter 1:2-3 proves this very point and it says -

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

So does James contradict what Jesus is teaching in this verse? The answer is no. We must keep in mind James says God does not tempt. *So then, why ask Him to do what He would never do in the light of what James says - that we should rejoice when trials come our way and not seek to avoid them?* The solution to the problem is understanding that Jesus is not speaking of logic, human reason or judgment nor is He speaking about theology but simply of a heart's desire and inclination that causes believers to want to avoid the danger of sin and the trouble it creates. The Jews would pray and say it in this way, "***Give us not darkness, but light***" - the focus is always on God.

Jesus viewed evil as a reality, not as some quaint illusion. He spoke of evil as a grim fact of life, and He stood against it. Evil is real. The very purpose of His coming was to deliver us from both its grip and its consequences.

When we think about temptation as a trial or test, our Heavenly Father uses testing for our spiritual devolvement which is why He does not shelter us from every trial or test, as we see often in the Bible. For example: Daniel 3:17-18 - King Nebuchezar used by the powers of darkness wanted to destroy the 3 young men of God but the Lord miraculously undertook and delivered them. This trial came to them not because of their sin but on account of the fact they sought to honour the Lord. Be it in death or in life, they were truly committed. They did not lose confidence in the Lord despite the threat and God used it for their benefit and His glory, and it even blessed others around them.

So trials and tests are permitted by the Lord to make us stronger in character as well as to strengthen us spiritually. Remember the Lord would rather make us holy than happy, He would rather make us spiritually mature than comfortable. Turn to the Old Testament, and to Genesis 50:20. Here we see Joseph explaining how God used the trial to his brothers who were wanting to destroy him, even kill him for God's glory, for Joseph's benefit, and the benefit of those around him. Again, God had His hand upon Joseph, His man of the hour. Jesus is teaching us to pray, "*do not allow us to be overcome by our testing.*" Or to put it more positively, "*use our trials to make us strong*". Testing can be very challenging because we are so aware of our own inner weakness and sinful propensities. But a test seeks to

bring out the best in us whereas temptation seeks to bring out the worst. Temptation (in what we understand it to be) cannot and must never be ascribed to God because temptation is a personal invitation to commit sin.

The child of God should have no desire to be in a place where even the possibility of sin increases. We shudder at the danger of temptation or even trials. This petition is a plea to God to protect us from the real danger of evil, to give to us what we don't possess in ourselves. We are asking for His help. Everybody is really happy that the past is forgiven but we should be just as anxious that we will be delivered from future evil.

Giving into a temptation to sin can destroy our relationship as well as our walk with the Lord. It can have much wider implications, like a stone thrown into a still pond it ripples out to the edges. Often some people assume wrongly that they are developing moral resistances by exposing themselves to the allure of sin. That is foolish and dangerous because we never outgrow the threat of sin's seduction.

Deep down inside we seem to like temptation, could it be that we really don't want to get rid of sin just the consequences? A Baptist church was advertising their bible study on this very verse, they wrote on a poster, *"Lead me not into temptation"* and some smart fellow came along and wrote beside it, *"I can find it myself"*. How true that is! We need to be aware of weak spots within. As one insightful commentator observed,

"In everyone is some weak spot and at that weak spot temptation launches its attack".

The point of vulnerability is different in all of us. What a violent temptation is to one man, can leave another very much unmoved. We also need to be aware of strong points, by that I mean, that we tend to guard our weaknesses, but often take chances with our strengths. Scripture warns us again and again about this. 1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Corinthians 8:2, Proverbs 16:18 and Proverbs 24:14, Matthew 26:33-34 and verses 40-41, Romans 11:20 and Revelation 3:17-18.

Coming back to Matthew 26:33-34, one Bible teacher helpfully suggested,

"We are in the habit of saying, "this is one thing I would never do and it is just there that we should be on the watch. History is full of stories of castles that were taken just at the point where the defenders thought them so strong that no guard was necessary"

We always need to be alert, keeping our eyes on Jesus. Temptations can spring from our social environment or circumstances of life, they can change so quickly that's why we need to pray this petition. We can be attacked from any direction like poverty, illness, marriage difficulties, problems on the job, and even people whose influence drags us down. We sometimes stagger under one blow of circumstances after another. Then we may begin to doubt God's goodness and mercy. At those times we especially need to pray, "***lead us not into temptation***". Attacks can come from the right. A false sense of security, acquisition of wealth, successful careers, good health, good reputation, recognition by people who love us are some danger points. Bible teacher Walter Luthi explains how this problem develops:

"Eventually we become arrogant or self-righteous, and in the end we even believe that we deserve our good fortune. We stop being grateful and begin to savour the most splendid gifts as if they were a foregone conclusion."

Does God really owe you smooth sailing? Answer is - absolutely no. A Greek youth was holding the tiller of a small boat in the Aegean Sea as an old sailor told a story. Absorbed in the conversation, the youth had to be reminded to be more careful with his steering. He replied in innocence, "*The following wind is favourable.*" The old sailor smiled and said, "*It is just for that reason that the danger of going off course is so great.*"

Yes, we must resist attacks from the right when everything seems favourable by praying, "***And lead us not into temptation.***" Attacks may come from below. The devil himself tempts us. Paul warned, "***Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes***" (Eph. 6:11).

Apparently the enemy of our soul plans his worst attacks for those who are most determined to get closer and closer to Christ. The Bible does not teach of evil as an abstract principle or force, but as an active, personal power in opposition to God. Alan B. Springfield notes that the devil's worst scheme is:

"Satan's best and most unique work is to convince people that he doesn't exist."

Barclay is faithful to Scripture when he wrote,

"The Bible does not think of evil as an abstract principle or force, but as an active, personal power in opposition to God."

Behind evil is "the evil one."

There are times when God permits Satan to have his way in our lives due to our disobedience and unfaithfulness (1 Corinthians 5:5). There are times when God permits Satan to do some things proving our righteousness, a prime example is Job. Yet God is not the tempter, evil never touches God. James 1:14 says '*Every man is tempted*' - not by God, but - '*when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed.*'

Men sin because they are tempted, internally by their lust drawing of the flesh, and externally by the enticement of Satan. It's time to remind ourselves that our help from above is more powerful than any attack from within, from without, or from below. Temptation is real, but victory is always possible through the enabling nearness of Christ.

Temptation on its own is not sin but it is the yielding that is sin. Jesus himself was tempted, yet He refused to yield to it. We are not marred by temptation, only by sin. *Remember the old story about applicants for a chauffeur's job?* The person looking for a safe driver asked applicants, "*How near the cliff's edge are you skilful enough to drive?*" One fellow replied, "Within a foot." A second said, "Within six inches." However one responded, "I'd keep as far from the edge as possible just to be safe" and he got the job. This is an important lesson for us. Keep as far from the edge as possible just to be safe. Jesus would rather you walk with Him as far from the edge as possible. *Why bother to live as close as you can get to temptation?* Temptation may be inevitable, but embracing, welcoming, and yielding to temptation isn't.

Temptation is always the first step to defeat and sin. If the possibility of failure did not exist, then the temptation would have no power and have no attraction to us. But let's remember, temptation usually comes through a door that has been left open, often deliberately.

We can be overconfident about a particular temptation. Charles Allen tells about a reformed alcoholic who had apparently conquered his drinking habit. Quite overconfident, when he came to town he parked his car continually right in front of the town's only bar. Eventually he gave in, and visited the bar. If only he had a healthy fear of temptation, he would have parked elsewhere and he would have more than likely not given into the temptation.

We can allow desire to capture our interest. This can be done by cultivating wrong friends or feeding your mind a wrong mental or spiritual diet. Potiphar's wife is a prime example when she tried to entice Joseph to adulterate with her. We read in Genesis 39:10 that it was a continuous daily occurrence. In the end, he did the right thing - he fled from her. Remember God had a purpose and plan for Joseph, as we read later on. The devil wanted to destroy that plan and rubbish God's word. We know he can't but that does not stop him from trying.

We can allow temptation to seduce us or we might even flirt with it. Look again at James 1:14-15. We can do God's will or do our own. If we want to know how we might overcome this Matthew 4 shows us with the account of how Jesus in the wilderness overcame temptation with the Word of God not by reminding the devil of who He, that is Jesus, is!

Often we attempt to hide spiritual defeat, tempted to hide our faults. Usually we follow one of three choices. We act as though nothing happened. We try to keep up a religious facade, even though the peace, joy, and presence of Jesus are gone. Denial never frees the sinner. We make excuses. Or we blame others, especially the devil. Some blame people who have been in the cemetery for years. What pitiful self-delusion! We adjust our values to include wrongdoing. Often we give new names to old sins.

What has been proclaimed as the "new morality" is simply the old immorality dressed in a new vocabulary but still filled with the old decay stench. There is good news, though: Any temptation that defeated us does not have the final word. The way to recovery starts with confession of sin. The Bible assures us of full recovery: ***"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"*** (1 John 1:9).

That's genuine forgiveness. The apostle John emphasized the same truth in these powerful words: ***"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins"*** (1 John 2:1-2).

Temptation is really real. Don't be fooled. Failure is a genuine possibility hence why Jesus wants us to pray, ***"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."*** But there is more to the story of God's redemption and grace.

Missionary Evangelist E. Stanley Jones had good insight when he wrote this petition with the following punctuation:

"And lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." I have inserted the first comma, which is legitimate, because no punctuation appeared in the original. That changes the sense. The prayer is for leading: "Lead us". The rest points to where the leading should be: "not into temptation, but from evil." This portion of the prayer is hardly morally intelligible without the punctuation, for God cannot lead us into temptation. . . .

"Lead us, so that evil is not a temptation to us any longer."

The prayer "***Deliver us***" literally means "Save us." This means "*Break our chains*". What a powerful prayer! Many Bible prayers are brief, to the point, and desperate. Peter cried, "***Lord, save me!***" (Matthew 14:30), and He did. The poor mother simply asked, "***Lord, help me!***" (Matthew 15:25), and He did.

Jesus heard them both, and He hears us. Brief prayers can be incredibly effective. As little Freddy started falling out of a tree, he cried, "*Lord, save me! Save me!*" There was a pause, and then he said, "*Never mind, Lord—my trousers just caught on a branch.*" Sometimes we are like that without recognizing who is in charge of the branch.

This petition from the Lord's Prayer, "***Deliver us from evil,***" seeks deliverance from all moral evil and it seeks freedom from sin's domination. It seeks divine help so we may be at our best. Jesus taught us to expect deliverance. The biggest lie of the devil is that we have to sin. "*After all, you are human*" he argues in an attempt to get us to quit the struggle.

Of course, we are human and tempted, but because of Jesus we can enjoy deliverance. Our Father not only can restore us but also can protect us.

In an old-time camp meeting, a former homeless alcoholic told how God had saved him out of the gutter. Someone else who had served time in prison related how God had rescued him from a life of crime. After several people testified to the power of God to deliver them from terrible sin, A young man jumped up and fairly shouted, "The Lord has done great things for you, but He has done far greater for me. He saved me from going astray. He has kept me from my youth." Deliverance means we can be freed from the deepest sin but it also means we can be protected from the deepest sin.

An incredibly reassuring biblical benediction begins in Jude verse 24, ***"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy"***.

Here the Bible tells us deliverance is needed. The prayer ***"Deliver us from evil"*** concedes that only God's power can save us. The Bible says it so clearly in Acts 4:12: ***"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"***. We cannot deliver ourselves. Like a frightened child, we turn to God.

The Bible tells us deliverance is guaranteed. 1 Corinthians 10:13 ***"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 stand under it"***. That means for even the most severe temptation, God provides power for you to overcome it.

God's promise of deliverance has never been repealed which means you never have to give in, regardless of the enormity of your temptation. We fail only because we choose to do so. We can never excuse ourselves by saying, *"It was too much for me"*, but we do try.

The Bible promises God will always provide a way out. At the end of World War II, Bruce Larson was stationed in Germany where sins of the flesh beckoned constantly. In those circumstances he prayed, *"Lord, I am Your person now. I don't want to be a part of this scene, but I'm weak."* He reminded the Lord of His promise: *"He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear"*. He prayed, *"Lord, I claim that promise"*. And he said it worked. Every believer can do the same thing. In keeping with God's promise, pray, *"Don't allow me to be tested beyond my limits."*

The Bible tells us that deliverance is complete. Jesus promised in Matthew 28:20, ***"Lo, I am with you always"***. Jesus is always present and available to us. The Synodal Version of the Bible used in some French churches, translates this last petition: ***"Abandon us not to temptation"***. That is so wrong because God never abandons us. During the Korean War, a young soldier burst into the chaplain's tent: *"Chaplain, pray for me. We jump off in an hour. Pray that I will come back alive."* After calming the fellow, the chaplain said, *"Son, I can't offer that kind of prayer. You are going out where the grenades will be bursting and the bombs falling. Hell is going to break loose. Some are not coming back. I can't ask God to favour you more than He does other soldiers. But I tell you what I will do—I'll go with you."*

That's what our Lord does for us. He does not whisk away all of our temptations, but He promises to go with us—all the way home, even when the way leads through the bombs, the grenades, and the hells of life. After introducing the subject of trials and temptations, the apostle James advises us in James 1:5, ***"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him"***.

What a promise! God endows us with a sanctified common sense to help us avoid unnecessary temptation. Paul urged young Pastor Timothy concerning temptation in his first letter, 1 Timothy chapter 6:11, ***"But you, man of God, flee from all this"***. Flee temptation and don't leave a forwarding address.

We have a Holy Helper. The Holy Spirit strengthens us for everything we face. We find this promise in Ephesians 3:16: ***"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being"***.

And God answers that prayer. The Holy Spirit equips us so we may ***"resist the devil, and he will flee from you"*** (James 4:7), but let us not forget the first part of that verse which is - ***'Therefore, submit to God'***.

Someone suggested, ***"What makes resisting temptation difficult for most people is that they don't want to discourage it completely."*** But let us pray boldly, ***"Deliver us from evil."*** The Bible supports such prayer. Remember 2 Timothy 1:7 - ***"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline"***. Our Father has equipped us with everything we need to overcome temptation.

The Word of God is our defence and it is a strong defence. Jesus did not offer Satan a list of reasons why He shouldn't concede to his temptations. Instead, our Lord answered every attack by quoting Scripture. That's the Christian's security system, that's our sword. A lonely teenage girl sought advice from an aged Christian mother, who at 80 sparkled with the presence of God. The teen asked, ***"How can I handle this particular temptation?"*** Listen to the advice she gave, ***"Temptation?"*** she replied ***"Why, honey girl, temptation is just another name for the devil. When the devil bothers me, I read the Bible to him."*** ***"You what?"*** exclaimed the girl. She picked up her Bible and held it high. ***"I tell him, 'Temptation, you old devil, all the promises in this Book are mine. See that? Read it.'*** Then I read it to him and say, ***'You just skedaddle on out of here.'*** Try this. It works."

We must use God's Word as our Defence. Scripture advises us Psalm 119:11, *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you"*. Let's face facts: Temptation is real. Failure can happen. Sin is a present possibility. But deliverance is available, possible, and provided. It's comforting to know that our Deliverer is "our Father." To Him we address this prayer: "Our Father . . . lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

It makes me feel like the child who was enjoying a trip on a transatlantic ocean liner, even during a terrible storm. "Aren't you afraid?" a passenger asked the little boy. "No, sir," the lad replied. "My father is the captain." Our Father has everything under control if we rest ourselves in Him.

Verse 13 closes with a doxology, simply saying -

"For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

It is simply an offering to God. Did you know that there's some manuscript evidence that Jesus didn't even say this which is why it's not included in some versions of the Bible. However some manuscripts have it, so we are unsure if he did say this. But I'm sure we can all agree, it is true. Amen! Because we know throughout Scripture we are told that His is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. And it's a fitting climax to finish the prayer.

Many commentators believe that Jesus said it because no Jew ever closes prayer negatively (take the Psalms for example). It is a beautiful and wonderful truth and it echos 1 Chronicles 29:11 which says - *"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."*

So whether Jesus said it or someone added it later, it's true nonetheless. His is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever.

As we look back at this prayer we can see that all we need is available to us. We've learnt that it is vital in our prayer life that God gets the rightful place. He should always be our focus, that's the first three petitions and then we bring our needs which are met in His wonderful, eternal supply.

As we go through every single petition we can see that they are gilt-edged promises from God. As John MacArther said

'God's name will be hallowed. That's His desire. God's kingdom will come. His will is to be done. He has already promised to give us our daily bread. He has already granted us, in Christ, absolute and total forgiveness. And He has already promised that He will lead us and guide us and direct us away from evil in the path of righteousness. So when we are praying, beloved, what we are really doing is merely claiming what is already promised to us. Therefore, the more we understand about the promises of God, the richer our prayers become. We're not begging God for what He reluctantly gives; we're really laying claim to the promise.'

Amen