

Praying for Deliverance

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles with you, then turn to the Gospel of Matthew with me! We have two readings tonight. We have the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6, and then afterwards we will turn to Matthew! Matthew chapter 26.

Matthew 6, verses 9 to 13. Pray then like this, 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 also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. And then Matthew chapter 26, verse 36. Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, Sit here while I go over there and pray.

[1 : 05] And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch with me. And going a little further, he fell on his face and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, So could you not watch with me one hour?

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. This is the Word of God. We are continuing tonight looking at the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus is on the mountaintop preaching to the crowds, and the last few weeks we've been thinking about what he's had to say about prayer. And prayer, Jesus says, is something that should be so natural for the Christian.

[2 : 16] We should be people who pray ready. We should be praying often and simply. And we pray to our Father who is always ready and able to help us.

And Jesus has been saying that prayer is a matter. It's about the attitude of your heart. At the same time, he says, Here is a guide. Here is something that is going to help you give a meaningful shape to your prayers.

That's one way it's been put. So let's just get right into this, this last petition. Pray then like this.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Three things. What is temptation? What is the nature of it? Secondly, where does it come from?

And thirdly, what can you do about it?

So firstly, what is temptation? And what is its nature? Christians speak a lot about temptation. The world speaks a lot about temptation.

[3 : 16] And one thing that we all agree on most of the time is that temptation is the idea that there is something that will bring us some sort of pleasure for a moment.

And yet it will hurt us in the long term. And it will be so appealing briefly, but it will destroy us in the long term. So wrong desires, long-term pain, brief joy, harmful effects.

And that's the way most of us talk about it. If that's the case, then we have to come to the Lord's Prayer and ask, what do we do with this last petition? Because if Jesus is saying, Lord, lead us not into temptation, as lead me not into doing wrong, James says in his letter that the Lord cannot be tempted to do evil, and He Himself tempts no one.

And so it will make no sense to pray, Lord, lead me not into temptation, as if He is the one who tempts you to do evil. Another way we think about temptation, and this is the way it's usually used in the New Testament in this word, it's used mostly to describe a test or a trial, a situation that we go through.

And in that test, there is either going to be a good, it's going to be a test of your character, a test of your heart, and there's going to be a good outcome or a bad outcome.

[4 : 44] And the test, or temptation is presented in that test, the bad outcome. So an example of this is the nation of Israel. In Deuteronomy, Moses says to them, you were brought out of slavery into the wilderness for 40 years.

That's the test, that's the situation, 40 years of wilderness. And he says, you were brought out to be tested. God tested them to see what the nature of their heart was, what their attitude was towards Him.

Will they love Him? Will they obey Him? Will they worship Him as they should? Or will they disobey Him? Will they not trust Him?

Will they not follow the way that they're supposed to be living? And what do they do? They wish they were back in Egypt. They break the second commandment, they build a golden calf, and they disobey God in so many ways in those 40 years.

So the word in Matthew 6 is taken in that sort of way. It's a test or a trial. Again, we're getting closer, but that's probably not what Jesus is referring to because if He says, if you take lead us not into temptation as lead me not into tests and trials, then what again do we do with James who says, count to all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

[6 : 16] Why pray against something that James is telling us to count as a joy? The most helpful way of thinking about this petition in the Lord's Prayer, the way that most of the commentators agree on, it fixes this tension.

We don't pray lead us not into temptation as if God is the one who tempts us. We don't pray lead us not into these tests as if these tests are evil because James says there are reasons for joy.

They will reveal to you who you really are. A helpful way of thinking about this in a way that a lot of writers suggest would be to say something like this, Lord, in this test, in this situation, please do not let me sinning be the outcome of this test.

Do not let me be brought into doing what is evil. So you see the difference. What is the temptation that Jesus is talking about?

It's beginning to believe that the best option in any test, any situation that comes into your life is to do what is actually the most harmful for you.

[7 : 28] Quick side note. We'll have a couple of these kind of side notes. One that I think most of us take for granted. We know that temptation does not equal sin.

And that's why we have two petitions. He says, forgive us our debts, forgive us for our sins, and then following that, he says, and lead us not into temptation.

Deliver us from the temptation to do sin. Temptation is not sin. If you have been tempted, even today, it doesn't mean you've sinned.

It becomes a sin when we stop wrestling and allow it to become an action in our minds, in how we act, in even how we speak.

That's why it's so important to pray this simple prayer. Please help me not to sin when it seems so appealing. Please do not let sin, please do not let my sin be the outcome of this test that I'm facing.

[8 : 32] So, a bit more precisely, we can go further in on this. We face tests every day, face trials every day. A friend can come up to you tomorrow, or someone in your family, or someone that you work with, and they can say, they can come to you and talk about someone, a mutual friend, a mutual work colleague, or whatever, and they can come up to you and say, man, let me tell you about this person, what they've done to me and how stupid they are.

And that's the test. And in that, you can either not entertain that and say nothing and change the topic, or you can say, well, man, let me tell you about what they've said to me.

And what are you doing there? You're coming to that test, and you're heaping up slander about this person. And either in that test, you learn to love your neighbor, you learn to bear with them, or you hurt them and your own trustworthiness in the process.

What about, that's one example, what about stress relief? That's a whole other topic. But, you know, when work and social life and just living in the city and feeling a lot of the time like we're lacking something, when that becomes too much, we find it easy to look in places that we shouldn't be looking for relief.

And from that test, the outcome can either be growing in your faith, growing in your trust in God, or choosing some sort of relief that you should never choose, something that will be really harmful for you.

[10 : 22] So, tests, life, circumstances, difficulties can lead to humbleness, spiritual strength, loving God like you should, being the person that you should be, or the complete opposite.

Entertaining and giving into what is actually so harmful for you. Jesus says to pray, pray tomorrow morning, Lord, let my sin not be the outcome of whatever tests I face in this new week.

What about the nature of temptation? If, you know, if you find, if you find that when things are so difficult and the relief or pleasure of sin is so great, then it will increasingly become the easier option for you.

and I think that's really difficult. It becomes the easier option to the point that it becomes habitual and your conscience is no longer, no longer seared.

So, an example that we probably all have in our minds already, and we looked at it a few weeks ago when Jesus talks about sexual lust and temptation and desires which actually break us.

[11 : 36] Now, if you're growing in your spiritual disciplines and you're learning to fight that and fight it more and more and more and someday the temptation gets so great that in a moment you give in then maybe your conscience is seared and that's a great thing.

But the nature of temptation is to come back again and again and again. It's not once and done, it's that it will come back the next day and the next day and the next day. John Owen, a 17th century preacher, he writes a serious amount about temptation and sin and he says in some instance temptation in some instance temptation can arise to such a height and it can press so heavily on the soul and in your fight with it it will fight back.

It will fight back more and more and more and you might wrestle with it and you might be growing as a Christian and the moment you give in your conscience is seared.

That's not the end usually. Actually by the nature of temptation it will definitely come back and it will convince you John Owen says that evil is not that bad.

That evil is not that bad. you might wrestle you might be wrestling with certain temptations tonight or this week or this period in your life and initially you know you could be getting unwell and soon soon John Owen says it will drag you away without much noise without much fighting and it's obvious I think we can all say that's obvious from the temptations we face you know think again of gossip if you're with your work colleague or your friend and you say something harmful about another person and you come away from that situation and you say I should not have said that about that person by the nature of temptation if you don't fight that then it's going to come back again and again and again and soon you won't even question it and maybe tonight you can think about your friendships your conversations and you can ask is speaking critically or negatively such a usual part of my conversation and if it's something that you've not even questioned then it's maybe a sign that this temptation has been growing and growing and growing and it drags you away without much noise one more thing on this looking at tests and situations and struggles and being won over by sin it's likely that it will not end with one but it will breed to more sin temptations come in packages we could say an extreme example very extreme example would be

[14 : 49] King David on his rooftop and he sees Bathsheba and he has lust for her and he has an affair with her and it doesn't end there does it because what's the next thing he does he sends her husband off to the front lines of war to be murdered so he'll never come after David you see what starts with one temptation with one evil brings immediately another one this week almost all of us will be working studying we will pick up our Bibles we will be coming to pray and the greatest temptation will be to pick up your phone and scroll for an hour and if not for an hour then you'll be pulling it out of your pocket every five minutes to look at it probably you know well firstly if you do that and if that becomes such a habit that it takes away from reading your Bible if it takes away from the work that you should be doing or the studying that you should be doing the long term effects are what laziness idleness prayerlessness doesn't end doesn't end there you might open you might open social media and be tempted into jealousy okay if you see someone who's got everything in the world that you could want then it doesn't end with idleness and laziness but it could turn into jealousy you have the whole of the internet to look and to be tempted into things that you shouldn't be tempted and you you might be tempted into spending and spending and spending and not using your money well and now obviously you know we can have phones we can have social media

I'm not saying bend your phones and come off social media and there's nothing wrong with that in self but this is just to say that in temptation it doesn't just end with one thing but it will turn into another temptation sin comes in a package and one struggle that we deal with will lead to so many more what is temptation what is its nature it's to come to a test it's to come to a situation we face

them all the time we face them every single day and it's to come to them and be enticed into doing what is actually the most harmful for you even if it promises satisfaction in the moment and though you might despair once over it though you might in the moment say I should not have said that I should not have done that it will keep coming back until you don't even question it and it will open the door to so many more struggles

Jesus says to pray then if you're a Christian will you pray tomorrow morning will you pray throughout this week Lord help me in the tests that you bring to me the tests that can produce good and produce more godliness will you help me not to choose sin and not to do what is evil in the tests will you Lord protect me from doing wrong secondly secondly where does temptation come from Jesus says it comes from the evil one the one who tempts us the Bible says is the devil Satan who Jesus calls the evil one and it's not clear right away in this verse but the word deliver us from evil that's usually translated as evil one it can be taken either way largely agreed that this is describing a particular person and so this whole phrase lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one

Jesus is saying you have a very real enemy who wants the absolute worst for you and he will tempt you into doing what is the most harmful for you while convincing you that you're going to love it the Bible doesn't reveal everything to us about this enemy but we see enough about him we see in Genesis chapter 3 that what's the first thing he does when we meet him he tempts Adam and Eve he tempts Eve into eating of the tree that they're told not to eat from why won't God let you eat from this tree it's not going to change anything live how you want to live be who you want to be there will be no consequence that's what he says later on in the book of Job he wanted to prove that Job only obeyed God because of his wealth and great family and he says if we take away his wealth and his family then we'll really see that

Job does not really love God and trust him in Matthew 4 Jesus is taken into the wilderness to be tempted he's taken by God he's taken by the spirit but it's Satan who tempts him here are all the kingdoms of the world you can have them all if you just give up on your mission whatever it is you're!

[20 : 13] your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour with the many small tests and trials that we will face this week God presents them as opportunities to grow into the whole person that we are meant to be the enemy wants the worst for you in every single one of those tests we can build on that yes you have an enemy he's not the only one who tempts you it doesn't end there what does James say again James in his letter each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire by his own desire Paul in Ephesians you were following the course of this world we don't have to think hard

I don't think about the struggles that we fight through and we at some point have to say I gave in to temptation I did what was wrong because I wanted to because I wanted it and you can point the finger at no one else but you have to say it was me who wanted to do this what about the world outside the trends that we are surrounded by the culture that we are in the world is trying to convince us that true meaning is found in the material and being whoever we want to be and not living as if there is some heavenly maker above us if you are a Christian living life is so hard when the world the flesh and the devil are out to get you J.I.

Packer says life is a spiritual minefield question that this brings out just a quick point some people ask is Satan is the evil one the cause of all evil we don't want to under or over emphasize his hand in this so the evil that I experience in my life the shame that I feel when I give into temptation how do I know if that was me or the culture around me or the evil one am I being targeted have I got a target on my back and he is out to get me we can undermine or overstate the influence that the enemy has and the safest answer to this is to say that evil giving into temptation doing what is wrong wherever that temptation comes from it serves his ends that's one way it's been put so we don't want to hyper spiritualize things but

I can say when I fall into temptation when I give in when I sin when I say that God is not enough that's exactly what he wants that's exactly what he wants if you're not a Christian tonight you might be saying what's the big deal these kind of issues that we face in our lives you could be saying these are not issues these are not troubles speaking about people and whatever we've mentioned live life as you want that might be your idea be the person you want to be forget this idea that you are a creature dependent on God and just do whatever you want and if you ask what's the big deal if that's your question tonight then all we want to say is that this evil one that we talk about who we

find in the

Bible he hates you too and he wants the worst for you as well his biggest wish is for you to leave here and think nothing else about what God says in his word and instead he wants you to keep on thinking you can do whatever you want in complete freedom and accepting this will be devastating for you we can you know we can all look out at the world and this is contested this is debated a lot but I think can we not all look out at the world and say evil is real evil exists gossip hatred lust it cuts so deeply into society on every level that we have to say leadership right down to friendship in all areas of our world has been damaged what is the source of that at the heart of all is the lie that we don't need to depend on our maker and we can be who we want to be and we can do what we want with no consequence whatsoever that is the lie that

[25 : 37] Satan tempts you into believing because he wants the worst for you he wants the worst for you and we might feel the brief joy in a moment you know we might get that rush or excitement or pleasure out of speaking or doing or thinking whatever what does Paul say the wages of sin is death that's exactly what the evil one wants for you Jesus Christ Jesus Christ the only true and good person promises to save you from that he promises to save you from that this is the trap I think we can so easily even Christians we can so easily find ourselves saying I will just do better I will fight lust and greed and all the temptations in my life and I will become good but we can't when the world our culture repeats the lie that the evil one whispers and what's even harder on top of that to admit

I secretly want this as well so often even I don't have my own best interests in mind Jesus Christ is the only person to have your best interests in mind and it took him to the cross he tempted to do evil tempted to reject his own father tempted to give up on his mission altogether didn't once enter into temptation and he died on the cross why he died so that even though we have given into temptation so often countless times this past week even though we have chosen sin rather than God even though we have believed the evil one we will not death will not be the end the brief pleasure or rush that we get when we when we give in to temptation the Bible says it kills no more Jesus says for the Christian by his death and rising again he promises that death will not be the end for us either that's the extent of his love finally then in light of that what can you do what can we do in the light of temptation the enemy wants you condemned and apart from God know tonight that the enemy has been defeated we'll go through four bullet points here of things we can do firstly know that the enemy has been defeated Jesus has risen he has paid the price the victory over sin has been won Romans 8 1 there is therefore and I know condemnation for those who are in Christ when you give in to temptation when you sin the devil has not won when I fail this week that's exactly what he wants but he has not won there is no condemnation if you are a Christian you are held firmly in your father's hands and he holds you and he says my treasure there is no condemnation the enemy wants the worst for you and God promises the best through the death of his son the bible says he might destroy the one who is the power of death that is the devil know that the enemy has been defeated following that then secondly since he has been defeated know that you can fight temptation in the spirit's power the world the flesh and the devil are out to get you they're out to get us Paul says the spirit that raised Christ from the dead is the same spirit that works in you tonight not by your power not by your power or strength but by the spirit you can fight temptation so will you pray that in each test you experience this week will you pray Lord let sin not be the outcome of this and know and remember that you can fight it will you flee this week from temptation sometimes that's all we can do sometimes it's so powerful and so overwhelming that all we can do is run away our phones they're not evil we've said that sometimes you have to turn off the wifi sometimes you have to leave the flat get out of the way of temptation but know as you grow in this walk of being able to fight it or as you grow in the spirit's power know that you will be able to fight it we are lured into so many traps and we get so entangled and sometimes we can't wrestle we just have to flee and from there learn to fight no temptation that we meet or that we face is beaten by us sitting on our hands and doing nothing by the spirit we wrestle to become the people we are meant to be thirdly and we will be really careful with this one we can be content with a level of shame which keeps us from entering further into temptation we said at the start that the nature of temptation means it will weaken the conscience and it will keep coming back when you wrestle and when you fight and you grow in godliness it's not a bad thing for a moment to feel bad and to feel awful about what you've done sometimes it can keep us that sense of shame can keep us from going even further into it so that's okay sometimes but at the same time if you're

content with the level of shame come back to the

[31 : 50] Lord's prayer forgive us for our debts and move on know that the enemy has been defeated know that the spirit can fight!

by the spirit so deeply entangle us don't be overcome with disappointment and shame but take it as a marker that God is working in you lastly will you this week think about the temptation of Christ in our call to worship we said that Jesus is able to sympathize with us in every respect he was tempted as we are and yet without sin and the question can be if Jesus didn't sin Jesus died he rose again and he gives us that hope but if he didn't sin can he really sympathize with me right now does he even know what it means to be human and to fight like this we probably only know a wee bit of the power of temptation because we give in so easily and so quickly and so often we Christ said no to every opportunity to break

God's law and because he kept saying no he knows the power of temptation better than any of us he didn't have the same sinful nature that we do but the devil still came to him in the wilderness and said here are all these kingdoms!

Here is the world just bow down and worship me and you can have everything you want the devil came to him then we read from Matthew 26 what does it say that Jesus was sorrowful unto death at the thought of going to the cross and dying the night before Jesus death he says if possible remove this cup from me a life of being tempted to give up in the face of that test what was his response nevertheless not as I will but as you will you need someone tonight to sympathize with you you need someone to understand how hard it is to face the struggles and the difficulties and the temptations that you face there is someone and he knows exactly what it means to be human and he knows exactly what it means to be tempted and then overcoming the deepest temptation in his death and rising again he says here is mercy and grace in every time of need and here is deliverance from every single temptation let's pray lord we thank you tonight that though we are so prone to wonder though we so easily give into temptation one has come and one has beaten temptation one has died and risen again and so tonight we take hope knowing that death will not be the end for us but we have victory because

Jesus has won it for us help us this week to fight temptation and to grow into the people that you want us to be we ask for Jesus sake amen