

“Deliver Us from Evil”
(Matthew 6:13)

Introduction: The Lord’s Prayer, as I mentioned a few weeks ago when we began looking at it, is a simple prayer that Jesus taught His disciples to pray. But even though it is simple, yet it contains virtually everything that we need to know about prayer. It tells us to whom we are to pray: to God. It tells us with whom we are to pray: we are to pray not only by ourselves, but with other Christians. It tells us for what we should pray: first, that God’s name would be glorified, that His kingdom would advance in this world, and that all men everywhere would repent and do what God commands, even as the saints and angels in heaven; second, that God would provide for our daily needs; and third, that He would forgive us in the same way that we forgive others. This brings us now to the last thing Jesus teaches us we should pray for, and that is that

God would not bring us into a time of testing, but deliver us from all evil.

Jesus is here teaching us that when we pray, we should pray that the Father would not only keep us from all temptation, but that He would rescue us from all the snares of the evil one.

I. Through this request, Jesus shows us what we already knew concerning God’s sovereignty: that even the temptations we must face and the sins we commit are ordained by Him. God is sovereign over all things.

- A. The apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:11 that God “works all things after the counsel of His will.”
 - 1. “All things” means exactly what it says: all things.
 - 2. If God is not in control of all things, then really He is in control of *no-thing*.
 - 3. If there is only one thing which He has no power over, then He is not absolutely sovereign, and if He is not absolutely sovereign, ultimately He can’t guarantee that everything He wants to happen will happen. That thing that is outside of His control, whether it is a person or an event, might possibly ruin His plan. Even a grain of sand, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, can change the course of history.
 - 4. God’s control must be absolute, or His is not sovereign.

- B. But if God is in control of all things, then it follows that He is also in control of all the evil which is in the world as well, all of it. He is in control of both the natural evil and the moral evil.
 - 1. Natural evil is that corruption which came upon the creation as a result of the Fall.
 - a. Remember, when God pronounced the curse on man, that curse also affected the ground. The reason why man would sweat now to bring forth bread was that the earth would resist him.
 - b. All of the creation was affected by the Fall. This is why today we experience such things today as hurricanes and earthquakes. This is also why we get

sick and why there is so much disease in the world.

- c. But all of these things are in the Lord's power. This is why there may be a plague in Africa or in Europe, and not in America. Or why AIDS is so rampant in several countries of the world, and may not be in others. These things are where the Lord wants them to be, in His time, and for His purposes.
 - d. The Lord said to Moses, when Moses complained that he could not speak well enough to be God's spokesman, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD" (Ex. 4:11)? The clay is in the hand of the Potter to make whatever kind of pot or jar He desires to make.
2. But what is more difficult for most professing Christians to accept is the fact that God is also in control of the moral evil which is in His world.
- a. Moral evil is that sin and corruption which infects God's moral creatures.
 - b. It is that which makes the devils and his demons as devilish as they are.
 - c. It is that which makes the world and those who are of the world as worldly as they are.
 - d. It is also that which makes us as sinful and weak as we are.
 - (i) We come into the world dead in trespass and sin. Greg Hodson gave us a lecture on this subject two Lord's Day evenings ago.
 - (ii) But even after we are converted, we still have a great deal of sin still in us, much more that we would care to admit, much more sin than grace.
 - (iii) And this is exactly why we are so easily drawn into sin. This is why we are so often so careless about our sin. We are like the disciples who couldn't stay up to watch with Christ even for an hour. They were too weak in their affections for their Lord to pray with Him. He said to them, "Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). There was some grace there by His Spirit, but the weakness of their flesh was far greater.
 - (iv) The same is true of us. We are weakened by sin. It not only blinds us to temptations, it makes us rush headlong into them. It not only takes the mercy of the Lord for granted, it turns that mercy into an excuse to commit more sin. We are infected by moral evil, and this evil makes us vulnerable to sin.
 - e. But God is sovereign even over moral corruption, over the devils, over unconverted men, and over our own remaining sin.
- C. But we must be very careful when we are talking about the fact that God has ordained and is in control of evil. Although God has ordained it, He is not the author of it: the creature is.
1. God did not create evil, and He does not create evil. When we sin, God does not make us sin. He does not force us to disobey Him.
 2. It is true that every time we sin, God has ordained that we would. But He is not the One who makes us sin. When we sin, we sin freely, because that is what we want to do. God simply chooses to use our sin for His own purposes. He

chooses not to intervene and stop us from sinning, so that He might accomplish His plan.

3. But what is that plan? Why did God ordain sin? Why does He allow it in His creation?
 - a. First, we know that He did not ordain it for its own sake.
 - (i) God doesn't like sin. He hates it.
 - (ii) Habakkuk the prophet wrote, "*Thine* eyes are too pure to approve evil, and Thou canst not look on wickedness *with favor*" (1:13).
 - (iii) If His eyes are too pure to approve evil, and if because of His infinite holiness He is infinitely repulsed by it, then why does He allow sin?
 - b. The answer is that He ordained it because of the good He would bring out of it.
 - (i) If anyone ever asks you why God ordained evil, you tell them that God did so because it was good that there was evil.
 - (ii) Of course they might say, "Good? Good for whom? It is certainly not good for everyone!" But then you can remind them why God made everything that He did in the first place. It was not for man's good, but for God's glory.
 - (iii) God is more glorified because there is evil, than if there had never been any evil. Remember, God did not make this world for man's glory, but for His own. Paul writes in Romans 11:36, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen."
 - (iv) Through the Fall, God has revealed more of Himself and His nature than He could have apart from the Fall. This is how He glorifies Himself: by revealing what He is like.
 - (v) God says that He will even work this evil out in the lives of His children for more good than if there had never been a Fall. Certainly all of us here would rather that we had never sinned. But if we had not fallen into sin, then we would never have known anything of God's mercy and grace in redemption, especially that great love which moved Him to send His Son into the world to die for such poor sinners as we are. As a matter of fact, since we have been redeemed by Christ, we will certainly be more blessed throughout eternity than if we had never been redeemed. If we had not fallen, we would only have received endless life. But since we have fallen and been redeemed by Christ, we now fall heir to everything that He deserves through His perfect work. We have more now than we would have then.

II. But the point is that realizing that God is in control even of all the evil which is in the world, if we want to escape its snare, then we must come to Him. We must pray that the Lord would deliver us from evil.

- A. First, we must pray that the Lord, in His gracious Providence, would keep us from being tempted. Jesus teaches us to pray, "Do not lead us into temptation."
 1. Does God do this? Does He lead His people into temptation?
 - a. We have already seen that He is in control of all things.
 - b. If we come into temptation, it must be because it is God's will.

- c. Jesus wouldn't be teaching us to pray that the Father would not lead us into temptation, if He, in fact, didn't do this.
2. But why would God lead us into temptation?
- a. Remember what it means to be tempted. To be tempted means to be tested by God. God allows us to be subjected to evil, so that He can show us certain things about ourselves.
 - b. Sometimes He does this to show us how weak we are. At other times He does this to discipline us for our sins, especially that of pride. Paul writes, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Those who think they have nothing to fear from sin are the most likely to fall into it. God would have us to be watching at all times so that we would not be overtaken by sin.
 - c. But at all times God does this so that we will learn. He wants us to learn not to trust in ourselves and our own strength and wisdom, but in His.
 - d. Now, if we can learn this lesson without being tested, if we can maintain a humble and contrite spirit at all times, and be so affected by our own sin and weakness that we never put our trust in ourselves but in the Lord, then we will not need to be tested.
 - e. And this is what we are asking the Father to help us do in this prayer. Literally, Jesus tells us to pray that the Father might never begin to lead us into temptation. God does not do this all the time, only at certain times. Here, we are praying that we would never be in a position where this becomes necessary.
 - f. This means that when we pray this prayer, we are asking God to keep us from the things which tempt us in the world, that He would restrain our corruption, that He would keep the devil's influences away from us, and, on the positive side, that He would bless the things He has given us to build us up in faith, such as His Word, prayer, worship and the sacraments.
 - g. These are the things which only God can control. We must therefore recognize this and humbly implore Him to overrule these things to keep us from temptation.
- B. The second part of this petition is a prayer that if we do fall into temptation, that the Lord would deliver us from it: "But deliver us from evil."
- 1. Now we live in a world which is full of evil, and because we do, the danger of falling into it is always there. Certainly, Jesus here teaches us to pray that the Lord would keep us from all evil, especially the evil one himself, the devil.
 - 2. But how much more do we need God's deliverance when we are actually in the middle of a temptation? Much more!
 - a. When we are weak because we have not been faithful in using God's means to strengthen us, when our corruptions have grown strong, when the devil tempts us with the things to which we are more susceptible, then we are in a position to fall into sin.
 - b. If we don't earnestly seek God at that moment, we will very likely fall.
 - c. The problem is that once this has happened, we don't feel any restraint or strength within ourselves to stop it. Our mind tells us it is bad, but our

feelings tell us to go straight ahead. And sometimes even our minds are so deceived by the temptation that we actually convince ourselves that we are doing what is good and right. But listen, *we are never more under the power of evil than when we commit sins believing that we are doing what is right.* This is the most dangerous position of all to be in.

- d. But if God in His mercy has left us with at least some measure of truth in our minds, some measure of conscience to tell us that what we are doing is wrong, then we need to seek with all the strength we can muster that the Lord would have mercy on our weakness and empower us by His Spirit to overcome the temptation. One of the most difficult things we as Christians will ever have to face in life is to try and break the hold our corruption has on a temptation once that hold is established. But it is possible. And if we at all understand how serious sin is, we will do all in our power to stop it. We must do all in our power.
 - e. This reminds us again how important it is that we do not allow ourselves to get into this position. It is far better never to enter into temptation, than having entered it, to have to fight our way out of it again.
3. But of course, we will not always be successful in our warfare. There will be times when we will fall into sin.
- a. When this happens, once we come back to our senses, we must repent of all that we have done, we must pray for recovery from the snare of the evil one, and we must earnestly pray that the Lord would give us the strength to escape falling into that sin again.
 - b. We need to also pray that we would grow in our understanding of how we fell into that sin in the first place, so that we would not fall into it again.
 - c. And we need to pray that the Lord would further sanctify us through this sin, and that He would eventually give us full and perfect victory over it and all of our sins through Jesus Christ.
 - d. Ultimately, this will not happen until we are in glory. But the Lord would still have us to pray for it now and seek for it now while we are on the earth.
 - e. May the Lord give us the wisdom we need this morning to learn from this petition. God is powerful, but we are weak. He is holy, but we are yet full of the corruption of sin. We cannot overcome our sin without His help. We need His grace. May the Lord help us then to pray this prayer and to really mean it from our hearts, and may He grant that we would be delivered from all evil.
 - f. And lastly, if this morning you cannot pray this prayer because you are still a prisoner to your sins, may the Lord grant that by His grace, you might come to Jesus and receive His mercy. It is only in Christ that you can escape your bondage to evil and to the evil one. Only He can change your heart and give you the desire to turn from sin to righteousness. Only He can deliver you from judgment and grant you entrance to heaven. Amen.