

he would equip us with everything we need to pass the test he sets and demonstrate ourselves to be his children.

[1 Corinthians 10:13]

The petition not to be led into, or at least not to fall fatally into, the temptation to sin, is supplemented by the petition that God deliver us from evil, or in some translations, from the evil one, that is Satan.

Again, as we acknowledge that God sets the direction for our lives, we beseech him that the course he sets would not lead us into the hands of Satan or into the thralldom of sin.

In many respects this supplement is just a positive restatement of what came before, asking that instead of directing us toward temptation, God direct us very deliberately away from it and indeed from all sin.

God is good, God never causes anyone to sin. If we sincerely desire to overcome sin in our lives he will provide all we need, through the person of his Holy Spirit, to do just that. He will lead us, protect us, and when necessary equip us to that we can stand firm and so that our lives will honour him, and bring him glory.

And that, as we talked about right at the start, should be the overwhelming desire of God's children.

Next week we start to look at the final lines, the doxology, which, though not in either the Matthean or Lucan accounts, have historically been seen as a fitting end to the prayer.



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Reflections on The Lord's Prayer

**“And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil”**

Last week we looked at the second petition for ourselves, namely for the forgiveness of past, and indeed future, sins, and we saw how the second petition for ourselves, the petition to God for his forgiveness, is so very closely linked to our willingness to forgive others.

When we are unwilling to forgive others for the sins they commit against us, it calls into question the sincerity of our own repentance, and our understanding of the overwhelming grace that God has extended to us.

God is willing to forgive our sins, on the basis of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Saviour, and while this costs us nothing, this salvation is immensely costly, and we dishonour the price that Christ paid for us if we are unwilling to forgive others.

God looks upon Christ's offering of himself on the cross, and says that it is enough, sufficient to cover the sins of all who would respond to him in faith. How can we then turn round and say it was not sufficient for the sins committed against us?

When we ask God's forgiveness for our sins, we do not do so with a sense of anxiety or fearful anticipation, but rather with an attitude of faithful expectation, knowing that God has promised mercy to those who repent and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The forgiveness of past sins, of course, is no guarantee that we will not fall into sin in the future. So we move on to seek God's help in that regard too.

Today we look at the third petition for ourselves, which is the second of two spiritual needs.

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”

The third petition for ourselves, the final petition in the prayer, concerns God's on-going protection from the effect of evil in our lives. Even though we have been forgiven, reconciled with God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and are a new creation, we still have within us sufficient of our old person to ensure that our struggle against sin will be a lifelong battle.

As human beings we will always be prone to temptation. Temptation comes primarily from three different places, and in two very different forms.

Firstly, temptation comes from within each one of us, from that part of us that seeks to satisfy its own desires and ends, quite apart from God's plan and purpose for our lives. Temptation comes from our pride and self will, and seeks to put us in God's place as the final arbiter of what is good and helpful for us.

Second of course, temptation comes from Satan, the enemy of our souls. In this case, temptation is a direct encouragement to sin. Satan, often making use of the weaknesses and propensities already within us, tries to persuade us of the pleasure of a course of action, one which is an offence to God and contrary to his will for our lives.

When tempted in these two ways we may feel that we should just gird up our loins and, with a stiff upper lip, resist these unhelpful and destructive impulses, and while we may enjoy some degree of strength and victory in these things, we will very often find that in the long run we are not strong enough to resist, and that we need help.

At this point we fall upon God's grace and power, and the person of the Holy Spirit within us, and seek his help and his assistance, asking that he give us strength beyond our nature, and enable us to stand firm in faith.

There is no sin in being tempted. Jesus himself was tempted in this manner, but unlike us, when Jesus was tempted he did not give in, and remained free from sin.

[Hebrews 4:15]

Thirdly there is a kind of temptation that comes from God himself. This is not the encouragement to sin, but a proving, or testing, of faith. God does not wish anyone to sin, and does not tempt anyone with the intention that they sin. Rather when God tempts, he is giving the opportunity for someone's faith to be tested, and proved.

[James 1:13]

When tempted in this way there is no wicked impulse driving us toward sin, rather God extends his strength and help to us, eagerly desiring that we remain strong and prove, to ourselves more than to him, that we are his faithful children.

When we pray that God lead us not into temptation, we acknowledge that God is sovereign over the direction of our lives, that he sets the direction and can change the course of our lives as he sees fit.

This means that God can lead us to a place where we are tempted by our own sinfulness, or by Satan, or simply to be proved by God himself.

When it comes to being tempted by sin we pray that God will not lead us into a place where that temptation is so great that we fall into it, where we lose control, and become mastered by that sin, until we are enslaved.

[John 8:34]

When it comes to being tempted by God, that is tested or proved, we pray that God will not put us to such a hard testing that it damages us and causes us to fall into sin. We pray not that God won't test us, but that his testing would be accompanied by his grace to endure, and that