

Praying the Lord's Prayer

Jesus gave us a 'model of prayer' in response to his disciples' request that he teach them how to pray (Lu 11:1). It has been suggested that Jesus' model is based on a rabbinic method using a series of topics that are easy to remember. We will work from Matthew 6:9-13.

This is the third topic that is focussed on our own practical needs that we can legitimately ask our Father in heaven to provide for us. Remember, the first three focussed on God and why we should reverence him. Now we have three that are focussed on our needs which he is only too happy to provide if we are willing to surrender them to his gracious and loving care.

Topic 6 – And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

i) And lead us not into temptation

Some have asked the question, "Does this mean that God can lead us into temptation?" No, he won't (Jam 1:13), but the question itself completely misunderstands our situation.

Let's do a quick overview of the history of temptation!!!

It started in the Garden of Eden, a not-yet-perfected-garden, but certainly an idyllic one:

Now the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, "You must not eat from any tree in the garden"?'² The woman said to the snake, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."⁴ 'You will not certainly die,' the snake said to the woman.⁵ 'For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' (Gen 3:1-5)

Even Jesus was tempted by the devil:

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.² After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.³ The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' (Matt 4:1-3)

Jesus said to his three sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane:

"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." (Matt 26:41)

The Apostle Paul sums up our situation very clearly, firstly, warning us not to give the devil a foothold in Eph 4:27, and then also in Eph 6: 10-13:

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² 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. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.
(Eph 6:10-13)

Our current reality is that we live in a fallen world in which we are surrounded by temptations for evil every day; plus, the devil is literally hell-bent on luring us into shifting our focus off God's gracious reign in our lives onto lesser things that appeal to our various senses.

As Jesus said, our spirit may be willing, but unfortunately, our flesh is weak and susceptible to all sorts of temptations. So, in this prayer, we are acknowledging the weaknesses that we know we have, and are asking God to strengthen us to withstand the temptations and move on from them – not that they will not come again, because they will – but God has provided a solution for us:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And 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 endure it.
(1Cor 10:13)

This is why we must learn how to live out the victory that Jesus has already won for us!!!

ii) ^{13b}**But deliver us from the evil one!**

¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.
(Eph 6:13-18)

Putting on, and keeping on, the armour that God has provided for us!!!

- **The belt of truth** – Jesus, the living Word, is my truth, and holds it all together. Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free!" (Jn 8:32)
- **The breastplate of righteousness** – Jesus is my righteousness, covering the heart – we have become the righteousness of God in Christ!!! (2Cor 5:21)
- **Shoes of preparation from the gospel of peace** – Jesus is my peace (Eph 2:14), and he has made peace for us with the Father (Rom 5:1).
- **The shield of faith** – faith that quenches every flaming arrow of the evil one. Faith comes by hearing a word from God. (Rom 10:17)
- **The helmet of salvation** – my Saviour who protects my mind for the battle. (Ps 140:7-8 NIV)

- **The sword of the Spirit** – the word of God which the Spirit wields on our behalf.

Take a look at how Gordon Fee, a New Testament scholar, interprets these last two verses of this passage, as an excellent translation of the actual Greek wording:

*¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,
¹⁸ through every prayer and request praying at all times in the Spirit (as the Spirit prompts and directs), and to this end staying alert with perseverance and prayer for all the saints.*