Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Protection of Prayer
Scripture: Matthew 6:13
Code: 2244

This morning we come to our last message in the disciples' prayer, Matthew 6:9-13. I say our last message not because I think we'll never talk about it again, but the last in our ongoing series in this portion for this time anyway in our study here at Grace. Matthew 6. And I'd like to read in your hearing verses 9 to 13 again as a setting for what I want to say to you and then we'll wrap up this final 13th verse this morning. "After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

We've been learning to pray. I trust we've been learning our lessons well. Our teacher has been none other than the Lord Jesus Christ who has given us this model for prayer. I daresay it behooves us to listen well and learn well and apply well the things that the dear Lord Himself has taught us. I know in my own life my praying has been reshaped to fit the pattern that the Lord has given us here, for this prayer known as "The Lord's Prayer" or "The Disciples' Prayer" is a skeleton for all praying. It embodies all prayers in its features for the ingredients of this prayer touch every area of need and every element of glorifying and praising God. It is a comprehensive masterpiece of all that is necessary and part of true prayer.

In bold contrast does Jesus present this prayer; in bold contrast to the substandard, inadequate, unacceptable praying that was common in His time. And if you were with us when we studied the previous portion from verse five to eight of chapter six, you remember that the Lord first of all pointed out the inadequacy, the failings of the prayer that was going on in the culture of his time. And He divided it, really, into two groups. There was the praying of the Pharisees and the praying of the pagans. The praying of the Pharisees, you will note in verse five, was characterized by hypocrisy. They prayed standing in the synagogues and at the widest portions of the intersections in the street in order to be seen by men. They were spiritually phony. They were parading themselves. They were not praying for the glory of God or the sake of God or for the expression of true religion, but rather they were praying to be seen. It was hypocrisy at its worst.

And then there were, in that culture, the pagans. If you'll notice in verse seven it says the pagans pray "using vain repetition thinking they will be heard for their much speaking." The Pharisees, then, prayed hypocritically and the pagans prayed mechanically. For the Pharisees, the prayer was only a pretense of supposed piousity, and for the pagans it was a mindless, babbling, routine ritual meant to

badger their God into response. And so if the sin of the Pharisees was selfishness, the sin of the pagans was mindlessness. If the sin of the Pharisees was hypocrisy, the sin of the pagans was ritualism; mechanical prayer. And Jesus sets over against that, in absolute and direct opposition, the proper kind of prayer.

And so we learn at the very beginning, then, that our prayer is never to be hypocrisy. It's never to be simply mechanics. We are never to pray as a pretense. We are never to pray as a parade of our supposed spirituality. And we are never to pray as a ritual, as a routine, as a form. And yet how amazing it is that this very prayer, the Lord's Prayer, which is set in contrast to that kind of praying, has been used as a vehicle for both hypocritical praying and mechanical praying. How many times have people stood up and muttered the Lord's Prayer hypocritically with their hearts not pure and right before God? How many times have you, in your past, muttered off the Lord's Prayer mechanically at the end of some ritual or some routine or some other prayer, mindlessly muttering words without a thought? And so even though the Lord sets this over against the contrast of hypocrisy and mechanics, we find that this even can fall into that category when the heart is not right.

You say, Well how must we focus to make the heart right? Well if you study the prayer with us you know that simply and only we focus on God, for more than anything else this prayer exalts God. It is a prayer that in every phase, in every petition, beginning and closing and all in between, focuses on God; His person, His attributes and His wonderful works are the thrust of this prayer. And so in order to prevent the prayer from being hypocritical or mechanical, we must come praying with a focus on God so there is the death of self and the end of mindless, contentless, non-communion. True prayer, then, is in humility expressing absolute dependence on God, and that's what our Lord is after. This prayer is God-centered, not self-centered. It is truth-centered, mind-centered, not mouth-centered. As we think of the thoughts that are true about God, we speak a prayer that has as its goal His own glory.

John Stott says, in summing up the thoughts I've just given you, "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, then, 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. Hypocrites pray because they have a wrong view of God. They think they're more important than He is. Ritualists pray because they have a wrong view of God. They don't understand that God is a God of love who desires to grant them things, and so they badger God with their endless mutterings, as if He had to be intimidated into a response.

It is an inadequate theology in both cases that makes their prayer so substandard, and so we, when we pray, must undergird and underpin our praying with a concept of God that is true and

comprehensive. And the more you know about God, the richer and fuller and more meaningful your prayer life will become. So to pray properly you must allow the Scripture to form your knowledge of God. I daresay that my prayer life today is totally unlike my prayer life 15 years ago, or 10, or five, because the more I know of God the more my prayer follows the biblical pattern and the more I see the proper expression and the proper response from God in return.

Let me add just a footnote to this as you look at that prayer. It struck me, as I studied this prayer again and again, that every petition in this prayer promises us something that God already guarantees. Every single petition already is a gilt-edged promise from God so that there's nothing to the fact that we are begging God for what is reluctantly dispensed on our behalf, but rather it is simply claiming or laying claim to what is already ours. For example, 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 we are 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. It's as if we had a policy with God and when we want to lay a claim we have a right to a claim. The premium has been paid by Christ, the policy is ours, all the benefits have been rendered on our behalf, and all we have to do is make the claim.

And so we're praying here, not in a begging fashion. And I believe that's why the prayer is so short. All we really have to do is register with God the need, and having met the conditions, He responds. Now there are conditions. We've seen that, right? It's one thing to pray, "hallowed be Thy name," but if there's impurity in my life, and unholiness in my life, and lack of virtue in my life, and sin in my life, God's name cannot be hallowed through me. But if I meet the conditions and my life is pure, His name is hallowed. And if my life is pure, His kingdom is made manifest. And if I submit to His will in obedience, His will will be done. And if I'm living as I ought to live before Him, He will meet my daily needs. And if I have done right with my brothers and sisters and I have forgiven them and taken care of those things, then He will cleanse and forgive me. And if I am desirous to walk in the path of righteousness, then He will lead me away from temptation and into the things that are right and good. In other words, as I meet the condition, I lay claim to the promise. That's what prayer is. That's what prayer is.

And beyond that, beloved, beyond that which is promised by God in the Word to which we lay claim, we have to say, "Lord, You don't talk about this in Your Word, but I'm praying it and simply willing to accept Your answer." But in this prayer we lay claim to what is already guaranteed to us. Now as we've noted, all of the features of this prayer speak of God. "Our Father," that's God's paternity. "Hallowed be Thy name," that's God's priority. "Thy kingdom come," that's God's program. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," that's God's purpose. "Give us this day our daily bread," that's

God's provision. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," that's God's pardon. And now this morning, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," that's God's protection. And then it ends with God's preeminence in the great doxology that closes this prayer. Six petitions; the first three related to God and His glory, the last three related to man and his need.

We come, then, to verse 13, the sixth and final petition. I believe it's one, not two. It's just a continuing thought. "Lead us not into temptation," a la the adversity, "but deliver us from evil." It's tied together as one. This is God's protection. We move, then, from our physical need to our spiritual need, to what you might call our moral need. God takes care of our daily bread. That's physical sustenance. God takes care of the sin of our lives by forgiveness, and God takes care of the moral standard of our life by guiding us away from sin. Verse 12 deals with past sins, verse 13 with future ones. Let me just say something here as a footnote. If you're a true Christian, let me tell you this. If you're a true Christian, I believe in my heart that you are just as concerned about your future sins being avoided as your past ones being forgiven. Did you get that? Everybody is really happy that the past is forgiven, and if that is a genuine expression of saving faith, I believe we are just as anxious that we be delivered from the future one.

When somebody comes along and says, "Well, I'm so glad my sins of the past are forgiven. It's so wonderful to know He keeps forgiving everything, I'm just going to go on and do whatever I want and live it up. I'm going to sin that grace may abound, and it's all forgiven anyway." I question the legitimacy of such a claim to salvation because a true son of God, this prayer says, not only is anxious that the past be forgiven, but that future sins be avoided. Why? Because to be a believer is to have a changed attitude toward sin. It is, on the one hand, thank You, God, for forgiveness from the past and please, God, deliver me from sins of the future. I am just as concerned about the future and not sinning as I am about the past and what I have done. The sinner whose evil past has been forgiven longs to be delivered from the tyranny of sin in the future. I know what sin does in the past. I don't want to get involved in it again in the future. God has been so gracious to forgive the past, I'm not anxious to tread on His grace in the future.

And so the expression of our Lord is this, as we touch the point of human need at its deepest place. We not only need forgiveness, we need more than that. We need preservation. We need deliverance. We need to be forgiven when we sin, yes, but we need to be delivered so we don't sin, too. And that is the cry of verse 13. The true Christian doesn't seek license. He doesn't find in grace a way to trample on God, a way to abuse His love, a way to force God to constantly forgive, but rather he seeks sanctification. Now some people have been confused by this petition. Look at it in verse 13. At first it seems simple, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." When we say it at first, well that's clear. Keep us out of trouble, God. Keep us out of trouble. But as you look at it a little closer, several questions are immediately drawn to your attention. Number 1. Lead us not into temptation. You mean we have to ask God to do that? Does God lead us to temptation if we don't ask Him? Can a holy, righteous, pure, undefiled, blameless, unblemished, virtuous God possibly lead

anybody to temptation? And to ask Him to deliver us from evil, I mean, if we don't ask Him, is He going to put us into evil?

That's the dilemma. People say if it means temptation, lead us not into temptation. Would God do that? On the other hand, people say no. You see the word "temptation" there means trial, and the prayer says, "lead us not into trials." Now wait a minute, wait a minute. James said, "Count it all joy when you fall into trials, because the trying of your faith brings patience and patience has a perfect work." So if you take it as a temptation you've got a problem because Does God tempt us? James 1:13 says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God can neither be tempted nor does God ever tempt any man." So how in the world can we say, "Lord, don't tempt us when the Bible says He never will anyway?" On the other hand, if we say, "Don't lead us into a trial, Lord," then we're denying another verse in James chapter 1 that says, "Count it all joy when you enter a trial." Now you see a little of the problem?

No matter how you deal with the word here, it seems to leave us with a problem. Let's see if we can't kind of deal with that problem as we go along, and I think you'll see the point. Let me say at this point what you have to kind of keep in mind. Basically, and I think Chrysostom, the early church Father, is right when he says this: "This particular petition is the most natural appeal of human weakness as it faces danger." In other words, it's not so cognitive. It's not so rational as it is emotional. It's the cry of the heart and it may not be the most theologically-reasoned statement, but it is the issue and the utterance of a heart that despises and hates the potential of sin. So we really don't look at it in a very precise, theological frame of reference so much as we hear it as the pain of the heart that cries to God for deliverance from encroaching evil.

Now I realize that Christian character is strengthened by trials. I realize that I grow in my trials. I realize that trials have a perfecting work. I also realize that God doesn't tempt me. God never tempts anybody any time to do anything wrong. That would be to defy His own nature. You say, What I've got here is a paradox. That's right, but it's not an unknown paradox elsewhere in Scripture. For example, in Matthew 5 you remember that the Bible says there, rejoice when you're persecuted. But if you go to Matthew 10:23, it says flee persecution. That's a paradox. Now what are we supposed to do, stand there and rejoice or run? There's a paradox there. There's a sense in which we run from persecution, but when it catches us we can know joy in the midst of it.

There's a sense in which we resist a trial. Nobody likes a trial. Nobody seeks a trial. We run from a trial. There's a dread and a fear in our hearts about going through certain trials, but we know that even in the midst of those trials there's a working of strength. There's an exercise of spiritual muscle and we're better for them and stronger for them. It's not unlike our dear Lord who said, "Father, let this cup pass from me." I mean there was something in His humanness that didn't want that, and yet it was through that that He redeemed the world, you see. And so there is something in the human heart that says, "Lord, if you can spare me the trial, do it. But if I have to go into the trial, then deliver

me from the evil potential that is there," you see? That's the essence of it. It is a prayer based on self distrust. It is the humility of self distrust that grows out of the previous petition because I know I'm a sinner, because I sense my debt, because I have gone through the pain of confession so many times, because I am so battered and bruised by a fallen world around me that continues to bump into me, I ask God, Deliver me from these things.

I don't trust myself. I don't know about you. I have to set a watchman over my eyes. I have to set a watchman over my ears. I have to set a watchman over my tongue. I have to be careful where I go and what I see and who I talk to about what. Because I don't trust myself, and when I get into a trying situation, it's at that point that I rush into the presence of God like the sentry on duty who doesn't fight the enemy himself, but runs to tell the commander. I retreat to the presence of God and I say, "God, I will be overwhelmed in this thing unless You come to my aid." And so it's a prayer based upon self distrust. The kingdom child realizes he lives in a fallen world, and that fallen world pounds against him with temptations of great strength which he, in his own humanness, can never resist.

This is a fallen world, people. Just look at nature itself. What do we see? Men face volcanoes and earthquakes. They face fires and floods and pestilences and accidents and disease and death, just on the natural level. Look at the intellectual world, how difficult it is for man to find the truth. His judgments are partial and unfair. Man careens on in the chaos of relativistic thinking to a destruction that's inevitable, propelled by his own self-bias and having determined that he, himself, is God. Logic is ruled by pride. Intellects are ruled by lust. Material gain makes liars out of men. There is the constant colliding of human opinions. All of these things tell us of the fallenness of the intellectual world.

Look at the emotional world. Grief and care and anxiety, the inability to handle attitudes shrivel up man's spirit. His soul is chafed by the rubbing together of life with life. Envy stings him, hate embitters him, greed, like a canker, eats away at him. His affections are misplaced. His love is trampled. His confidence is betrayed. Rich, he steps on the poor. Poor, he seeks to dethrone the rich. Prisons and hospitals and mental institutions, penitentiaries mark the moral, emotional upheaval of man.

Look at the spiritual world. That's the darkest and thickest blackness of all. Man is out of harmony with God. The machinery of man's moral nature is visibly out of gear. He's running out of sync with God's divine plan. Evil tendencies dominate man from his tainted, fallen ancestry. He may want to do right, but he feels pulled down by some irresistible gravity of evil. And it's a fallen world every way you cut it. Man is faced with an overpowering evil. Man is divided. He is a disheveled thing. He is a monster. He is one who is prone to anything evil, conscious of his inability to withstand it. And so we live in this knowledge. We live in this fallenness. And the cry of the heart of the believer is, "God, lead me out of the potential of evil that's in my trials."

Let's look at the phrase itself. "And lead us not into temptation." Would God deliberately lead us to temptation? Look at James 1 for a minute. Would He do that? James 1:13 says, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted by God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempted he any man." God never tempts anybody. Now God may allow Satan to bring certain trials into Job's life, but Satan does the tempting, not God. God may allow, 1 Corinthians 5:5, some evil believer in the church to be turned over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, but it is Satan that inflicts it, not God. God may discipline, as in 1 Timothy 1:20, "Turning one over to Satan to learn not to blaspheme." And God may permit Jesus Christ to feel the onslaughts of hell against Him on the cross, but it is not God that does the tempting. Sometimes it is encompassing will. He allows that. By the way, beloved, you will note that God allows all that is, because He is in control of everything, so that's no problem for your theology. God has to allow everything that is or it couldn't be.

And there are times when God allows us certain trials. There are times when God allows Satan to have his way in our lives because we've been disobedient and unfaithful. There are times, like in Job's case, when God allows Satan to do some things to prove how righteous we are. But God is not the tempter. Evil never touches God, quite on the contrary. James 1, says, verse 14, "Every man is tempted" - not by God, but – "when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed." I think when he's drawn away of his own lust is that internal drawing of the flesh. And enticed, you could add in parenthesis, by Satan, is that external pull by Satan. Men sin because they're tempted, and they are tempted internally by their lust and externally by the enticement of Satan. "Then when lust conceives, it brings forth sin and sin, when it's finished, brings forth death." But watch this, "Do not err, my beloved brethren." Do not make a mistake at this point. When sin comes and lust comes and temptation comes, remember this. "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there's no variableness neither shadow of turning."

Know this. That every gift that God ever gives is a good and a perfect gift, and that will never vary and God will never turn from that, so that when evil comes it comes not from God. And it is important to understand this theological truth. People hassle about this all the time. God allows evil. That's in His own choice, and we'll have to wait for eternity, if even then, to find out why. But God allows evil. God does not do evil or tempt to do evil. Everything that proceeds from God is a good and perfect thing. You have to keep that tension in your mind. God allows certain things, but they are not the expression of His heart, His mind, His will or His character. In fact, if you want to know what God feels about temptation, simply listen to Jesus in Matthew 26:41. Jesus said to His disciples, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation." In other words, He wanted them to avoid it. And how does Satan tempt us? Lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and what's the third one, 1 John 2? Pride of life. And it says, "And these are of the world. They are not of the Father." You see? Those things do not proceed from the Father, but from the world, the flesh and the devil. Now the total is within the framework of God's allowance, for He has given men a choice. He didn't make us robots to love Him and to do right because we had no choice. And so God does not tempt us to do evil, rather God's desire is that we watch and pray and not enter into temptation.

Now listen, when you sin, don't blame God. Lust comes, as the Latins used to say, ab intra, "from inside" or ab extra, "from outside." From Satan, but not from God – not from God. So the first thing we want to do, then, is go back now to Matthew, and let's apply what we've just said. "Lead us not into temptation." Now we see the word "temptation." Listen. We see the word temptation and it's a very important thing to stop and see what that word means. It is the word peirasmos and it is used over and over in the Scripture. It is a neutral word. It doesn't mean bad, it doesn't mean good, it is simply a test or a trial. That's all it means. Now the English word temptation means seduction to evil, but the word temptation is not always the right translation. Sometimes this word is translated "test." Sometimes it's translated "prove." Sometimes it's translated "trial." Sometimes it's translated "temptation." And that's because it can be any of those things. It is a test. It is a neutral word. We think of temptation as a seductive act which draws us into sin, but the word peirasmos here, I'm convinced, would better be translated "trial." Let's read it that way. "Lead us not into trials, testings." Now let me give you a thought here. Any time there is a legitimate trial or test, there is the possibility to pass or to – What? – fail, or it isn't a test. You got to have the possibility of pass or fail, succeed or not succeed.

So when God brings a trial – now mark this – there is always the possibility that that trial can be turned into a temptation. Joseph said in Genesis chapter 50 verse 20, regarding his brothers selling him into Egypt, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for" – What? – for "good." In every vicissitude and struggle and trial of life, God brings it along to test us, to exercise spiritual muscle, to strengthen us, to grow us to maturity, but in the midst of that, if we don't perceive it through the eyes of God, committed to God, stand in His strength, Satan turns it into a temptation, entices our lust, draws us into sin.

So mark it. The word is a very fitting word. When the prayer says, "Lead us not into trial," I believe the implication of the prayer is, "Lord, don't ever lead us into a trial which will present to us such a temptation that we will not be able to resist it." Did you get that? "Don't ever lead us into something we can't handle. Don't give us a trial that is going to become an irresistible temptation, but rather deliver us from any trial that would bring evil on us as a natural consequence. Don't put us into something we can't handle." And, you know, that's just a claim of a promise, as we shall see in a little while. The term implies testing. It implies a process. And by the way, any time you see a word like peirasmos, with an asmós ending on it, that is a Greek noun, that the asmos ending implies a process. Don't put us into any process, any procedure, any series of circumstances, any situation that is going to draw us into irresistible sin. Now James is assuming, and I think it has to be assumed here, that God is not going to do this. A holy, sinless, absolutely righteous God is not going to incite us to sin. He's not going to allure us into sin. He's not going to tempt us into sin. But He will bring things into our lives that become tests for us.

You walk along and you pass a certain magazine, a certain book, a certain movie theater, a certain program on your television. That's a test. That's a test. It can be a test to show you your spiritual strength, cause you to grow, or if you fail, it's turned to a temptation and incites your lust and draws you into sin. You're fired from your job. It might be a test. How are you going to handle it? On top, positive, joyous, committing it to the Lord? You passed. But in the midst of it, Satan says that dirty guy, that's your boss, you ought to do everything you can to ruin his reputation. Talk about him, badmouth him, gripe, complain, say a few words to God, too, for making it tough on you. Satan's working on the temptation end of the same circumstance while God is working on the trial. It's kind of like Matthew chapter 4. It says the spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be peirasthnai – to be tested. For God it was a test to prove His virtue. For Satan it was a temptation to destroy His virtue, you see? And so that's the way it's going to be in our trials. That's why trails are valuable. You've got to have them to grow. At the same time, they potentiate sin.

Job said, "When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold," because he approached his trial the right way. James 1 says, "Count it all joy when you enter a trial, because trials have their perfect work." Peter said, "In this you rejoice, that now for a little while you have to suffer various peirasmos – trials – so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." In other words, the trial is to prove the genuine gold of your faith. Peirasmos is a trial. God's purpose is for good, but Satan tries to turn it to evil. Summing up, what are we saying? A trial is a test to prove your strength, exercise your spiritual muscle, develop your spiritual strength like God tested Abraham in the offering of Isaac, Hebrews 11:17 says. God wanted to show what a virtuous man he was, strengthen his faith. But Satan wants to turn it into a temptation. And the cry of the verse is simply this, "O God, do not lead us" or "allow us not to be led" or "cause us not to be led." Do not permit us to be led into a peirasmos which becomes an irresistible temptation that we can't handle.

And do you want to know something interesting? This means that the Lord has to work out your whole life because there are certain things that you need to grow. But if they came to you at the wrong time in your life, while you were too young in the faith, you wouldn't handle them and instead of growing you'd fall to them. For example, there are certain temptations that come to me now that I never could have dealt with when I was young in the faith. Never. But as I have been strengthened, I am able now to deal with more than I was then. The Lord has to then order our whole life so that at no point in our life will we ever be tempted in a situation where we do not have the strength to resist. So Satan and the flesh enter our trials, trials that God brings to perfect us, trials that God brings to help us to strengthen others, trials that God brings to teach us to trust Him, trials that God brings to drive us to the Word of God and to our knees. And into those trials comes Satan with his temptations, and depending on how you respond the tale will be told.

So this petition, beloved, is a safeguard against presumption and it's a safeguard against false senses of security. When you think you stand, you'd better take heed lest you – What? – fall. You

think you've arrived spiritually, but you haven't. A rich and simple phrase. By the way, the word "into" – "lead us not into" – it's an interesting word. It's eis in the Greek, and some have compared it to the Hebrew "into the power of" or "into the hands of." So that what it's saying is, "Do not cause us to be led into the hands of the trial." In other words, if the trial is around us, that's one thing, but don't let us get into the hands of that trial. That's when it becomes a temptation. In other words, as long as we're in the boat, the sea can churn all at once - just keep us in the boat. Don't let us get in the sea or we'll drown. Don't let us get caught in the vortex of the trial. Keep us in your hands in the midst of that trial.

By the way, our dear Lord prayed the same prayer in John 17:15 when He said to the Father, "Father, I ask not that You take them out of the world, but that while they're in the world You keep them from the evil one." Don't let them fall into the hands of, or into the power of, the evil one. Martin Luther said, "We cannot help being exposed to the assaults, but we pray that we may not fall and perish under them." And that's the essence of it. It's a prayer for God to defend us when He tests us, so Satan and the flesh do not turn His tests into temptation, which become irresistible and draw us into lust and lust into sin. Now how do we deal with it in the middle of the trial? When we begin to feel temptation coming, here we are in the trial. Somebody has died. We've lost a beloved one, lost a job, angry at our wife or our kids, conflicts in relationships, upset with the church, whatever it is we're in a trial – financial or emotional, psychological, social, spiritual. We're in this trial and we're saying, "Lord this is a growing time."

And Satan begins to hit at us and wants to make us bitter and angry, and so how do we deal with it? I think James 4:7 gives us a simple word. We don't have time to go into detail; I want to wrap up our thoughts. But in James 4:7 it says this, "Submit yourselves, therefore, to God." "Submit yourselves, therefore, to God." Now how do you do that? What do you mean, submit to God? Well, that means get under God's lordship. Would you agree with that? Get under His lordship. What does that mean? That means if I'm going to submit to God and to His lordship; that means I'm going to do what He – What? – says. What does it mean to submit to God then? It means to live in submission to biblical principles. He's just quoted it in verse 5. "Do you think the scripture sayeth in vain?" It's talking about the Scriptures. "Submit yourselves therefore to God." How has God self-disclosed Himself? How has God revealed His will? How has God revealed the principles of His lordship? How has God manifested that which He wants us to do? In His Word. And so as we enter into a situation of a trial, what we do then is we begin to order our responses to that trial according to the principles of the Word of God and that's how we submit to God. And as we order our life according to the principles of the Word of God, we find that in that way, we resist the devil and he will – What? – flee.

That's a great word, isn't it? Submitting to God is not some esoteric thing. It's not some spaced out, emotional trauma. Submitting to God is ordering my life to respond in accord with the biblical revelation of God's will. And so in the midst of a trial I say, "O God, I need your strength infused in me, and I submit to the truths of your Word. And my responses and my attitudes and my actions and my thoughts and my deeds are all in submission to Your Word." You can pray to submit to God all

you want, but until you get your life ordered, it isn't going to do any good to pray that way. You can say, "I submit to you, Lord, protect me," and just keep on sinning and just keep on wrongly reacting, and you're violating the very thing you're asking for.

Submitting to God is to submit to His Word. It is His Word that prunes off the sucker branches in John 15. It is His Word that is hidden in our heart that we might not sin. It is His Word that is the sword that defends us against the attack, Ephesians 6. And so that's what He's saying. How are we going to be delivered in the midst of the trial? By submitting to God. And as we submit to the truths of His Word and take up the sword of the Word of God, we begin to put it into use in our lives. Then, in that manner, we resist the devil and he flees, and that trial stays a trial and never becomes an irresistible temptation. What is this petition saying, beloved? Listen, now. I want you to get it. It faces the danger of living in a cursed world where we are being battered by evil around us. It confesses our inadequacy to deal with that evil. It confesses the weakness of our flesh. It confesses the absolute lack of human resource. It takes into account the fact that we are impotent, and it demands the protection of a loving Father as we submit to His Word. My heart shrinks from trials. I don't like trials. I don't look for them. I've prayed many times in my life, "Lord, bring into my life what I need to be the man you want me to be," but every time I say that I think in my mind, Boy, I don't know what I'm asking. And I'm not anxious to get into trials. As soon as I get in a trial I can only think of one thing, getting out. I don't think about staying in there, I think about getting out of that thing. And I look back on trials in the past and I actually get happy that they're over. Nobody likes them.

I don't like it when somebody I love dies or somebody is hurt or some problem happens in my life. I don't like that at all. And so I don't say, "Lord, I just wanted you to know that it's so wonderful! Just keep bringing them!" I don't pray like that. Christ didn't pray like that. He said, "Let this cup pass from me." But then He turned around and said, "If this is what's necessary, Lord, then let it be." Let it be. So we cry with Christ, "Father, spare me the trial, but if the trial fits your wisdom and the trial fits your way and the trials fits your will and the trial fits your plan, then protect me through the trial so that I can come out as Daniel's three friends did without even the smell of smoke. So that I can come out as Daniel did when he walked out of that lion's den, untouched." Daniel needed protection in the lion's den and so do we when we go into that trial, right? We can't do it on our own. It has to be a divine resource. Well, do you think God will hear this prayer? Do you think God will protect you from trials that are irresistible temptations that draw you into sin? I do, and it's based on the verse that I want you to see, 1 Corinthians 10:13, one of the great verses in all the Bible. And you knew I was going to get there sooner or later, didn't you?

First Corinthians 10:13, what does it say? "Don't do it in your own strength," verse 12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Then verse 13, "There hath no peirasmos," – no trial and no temptation – "from Satan taken you but such as is common to man." You're not going to get one that's sort of superhuman. You're not going to get one that isn't one that everybody else hasn't had. And in the midst of it, God is faithful. You know that in every trial, God is faithful. He has

promised never to leave you, never to forsake you, and He is faithful. I'm so glad. Aren't you glad God didn't say, "You know, you're going to have a lot of trials in life and I'm going to try to hit about one out of 10 of them for you." That would be pretty bad. He says, "I'm faithful. I'll be there in every one of them." God is faithful. He will not allow you to ever be peiraz, "tried or tested or tempted" above what you are able. Never. You can never say, "Well, it was too much for me." He'll never allow that, and He will always, with that trial, make the way out. Ekbasis, "the way out." And you know what the way out is? The way out is "through." You got to go through the trial like a tunnel. The way out is "through."

If you get derailed into a temptation or sin, you've missed it. The way out is through, in order that you may be able to endure it. What does that say? God never, ever, ever allows a trial that is more than you can handle. That's the answer to the request, "Lead us not into trials, but deliver us from the evil" or "the evil one" – the flesh or the devil. And He says, "All right. I will never let you be tempted above what you're able." In other words we're only laying claim to a promise and if we meet the condition, we have the right to lay claim to the promise. What is the condition? Submit yourselves to the Lord and resist the devil. That sums the prayer up. It closes with a doxology. The doxology is simply this, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." That's a doxology. You just say it. You just think it. You just offer it to God. You don't dissect it. And by the way, there's manuscript evidence that Jesus didn't even say this. That's why it's not included in some of your versions of the Bible. We don't know whether He said it or not. Some manuscripts have it, some don't.

I'll tell you one thing, it's true. Amen? His is the kingdom and the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen. It's true and I like it there. It seems a fitting climax. Some commentators say they almost think it would have to have been there because the Jews would have never closed a prayer on a negative note like that. And so because it's there and because it's true we speak it beautifully and wonderfully. It's an echo of 1 Chronicles 29:11 which says essentially the same thing. Whether Jesus said it or whether someone later added it, it's certainly true. His is the kingdom and the glory and the power forever and forever. What have we learned in this prayer? All that we need is available to us. First, God gets the rightful place, the first three petitions, and then our needs are brought to Him and met in His wonderful, eternal supply. Let's pray together.

Father, we echo this prayer in our own hearts. Deliver us from evil. Deliver us from sin's penalty, sin's dominion, sin's guilt. Deliver us from sin's consequences affecting our intellects and our emotions. Deliver our wills from bondage, our judgments from perversion, our imaginations from falsehood. Deliver our memories from bitter reminiscences. Deliver our instincts from sinful drifting. Deliver our affections from what is earthly. Deliver us from weakness, that we may know the fullness of Your strength. Thank You for this time, Father, this morning. We bless Your name for it. Thank You for this prayer. Your name be hallowed, Your kingdom come, Your will be done. Continue to give us, as abundantly as You have in the past, our daily bread. Help us to be forgiving others that we may know the fullness of Your paternal forgiveness, and thank You for the promise that You'll never lead us into something we can't handle. But Lord, we can't handle any trial unless we submit to You and resist the

devil. Help us meet the conditions, to know the fulfillment of the inestimable promises of this prayer, and to pray as we ought for Your glory. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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