

Asking for God's Protection

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Date: 18 October 2026

Preacher: William Philip

[0:00] And so we're going to turn to our Bible reading. And we're continuing this morning in our series on what is known as the Lord's Prayer, as Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray.

Today, Willie Phillip, our senior minister, will be preaching to us from this. And we're going to read this morning first in James chapter 1. So do turn James chapter 1 up, and then we'll be going to Matthew chapter 6.

We've got plenty of visitors' Bibles. If you don't have one with you, the welcome team will be on hand to bring one to you. If you wave your hand, I'm sure Angela will be delighted to give one to you. But do open up a Bible and follow along. First, on page 1011, James chapter 1, beginning at verse 1.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion.

Greetings. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds. For you knew that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. And then we're going to pick up again at verse 12.

[1:31] Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am being tempted by God. For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then, desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin.

And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death. We'll do turn back to Matthew chapter 6. If you're using the visitor's Bible, that's page 811.

And we read from verse 9. Matthew chapter 6, verse 9. Pray then like this.

[2:38] 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.

Well, amen. This is God's word. Well, good morning, everyone. Would you turn with me to Matthew chapter 6, and to the passage we've been looking at together over these recent weeks, passage we call the Lord's Prayer or the Disciples' Prayer, where Jesus is teaching his followers how to pray.

And we come today, really, to this final petition, although we will have another session on this next week. But we're looking particularly at verse 13. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Now, we saw last time that in asking for God's provision for our lives, for our daily bread and so on, we're also acknowledging that provision.

[4:04] And in asking that way, we're accepting it thankfully. We're content with our God's provision for us. So the daily bread that we seek, we're asking for God's bread, God's way.

Not our bread, our way. And that can be a very different thing. So we trust God for our daily food. We trust him for all the things that we need for earthly life.

That's what our daily bread is. And we trust him for our daily forgiveness, which is everything that we need, not just for earthly life, but for eternal life.

And the final petition here in verse 13 is similarly one with both an ask and an acknowledgement. And I want you to see that.

We ask for God's protection. We ask, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil or perhaps better from the evil one. And we ask like that because we know that we need God's protection.

[5:06] But also, and this is important, also because we know that God has promised that protection and that he will give it to us. So this is a petition that again recognizes our weakness, our humble dependence on our heavenly father in everything, in all things, not least in this area of temptation, which is one where we feel our weakness, don't we?

Very acutely and very often. But here too, the Bible tells us that God's grace is sufficient for us. And that's so encouraging. It has to be because we need it, but it really is.

Look back at the last verse of Matthew chapter 5. We've looked at this a number of times because the context of the prayer here in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount is so important. Look at Matthew 5 verse 48.

Jesus says that we are to be perfect even as our heavenly father is perfect. Well, how on earth can that possibly be? Unless God gives us of his own perfect righteousness, unless he blesses us with heaven's ways.

But that is precisely the message, isn't it? Of his wonderful gospel of grace. That's how the Beatitudes begin. Look at chapter 5 verse 3. Blessed are who?

[6:29] The poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Isn't that an extraordinary thing? Verse 6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Why? They hunger and thirst for what they don't have. But they're the ones, Jesus says, who will be filled with these things. And you see, that is what this petition in verse 13 of chapter 6 reminds us as well.

And again, it's the very opposite of what we've seen that Jesus is addressing in this chapter. Religious hypocrisy and pride. Now, this petition in verse 13 is the humble prayer of those that know that our heavenly father sees us and sees our true hearts and knows what we need, but is ready to answer us and to give us what we need.

And therefore, we pray, Lord, in our weakness, when we're caught up in trials and temptations, we need your leading. We need your help.

In our frailty, when we're caught up in sin, we need your deliverance. Lead us not into temptation. Now, that word really means trials and testings of all different kinds.

[7:44] Not just temptations to do wrong things. The Lord includes that. And we're praying in that situation, Lord, deliver us from evil.

Or as I said, I think it is better, as the footnote suggests here, to read this as the evil one. Both here and in chapter 5, verse 37, you'll see the footnote tells us it can be translated either way, but there are many places in the Gospels where really it can't possibly be translated any other way than the evil one.

Later on in chapter 13, in the parables of the sower, for example, the same word is used when Jesus talks about the evil one coming and snatching the seed away.

Jesus, in John chapter 17, where he's praying just on the eve of his crucifixion for his disciples, he's saying, Father, protect them from the evil one. So that's what he's praying here.

And when we pray, Lord, lead us not, it seems a funny thing for us to say, it's not the way we talk normally, lead us not. It's called a, the fancy name is a latotes, but you don't need to know that.

[8:51] It just means, it's a fancy way of saying, do the opposite. Lord, do the opposite. Lead us not into testing so that we're engulfed by it. That's what Jesus prays, tells the disciples to pray.

Do you remember in Gethsemane, in chapter 26 of Matthew's Gospel? Pray so as you will not enter into temptation, so that you'll not be overwhelmed by it. But rather, away from it, lead us away from it, lead us, well, perhaps even to triumph over it, is what he's saying.

Not this way, to go down under it, but this way, to bear up in the midst of it. Now, you need to be careful here, because you might, you might sense a problem there.

You might be thinking, well, how does that fit with Jesus' clear teaching, lots of times through his followers, that in this world, we will face trial and temptation. Remember, Jesus says in John chapter 16, in this world, you will have tribulation.

So, how are we praying, Lord, lead us not into that? Well, remember what he goes on to say there. Lead us, you will have tribulation, but, be of good cheer, because I have overcome the world.

[10:05] And that's the clue, you see, I have overcome. And what that implies is, that trials, and temptations, and tribulations, though they must come, and though they will come, there are two different ways, of looking at these things, two different ways, of reacting to these things, and two very different outcomes, in our hearts, and our lives, depending on how we do, face these things.

And we need to understand that, if we're going to understand, what Jesus is really teaching us, to pray for here, in this petition. That's why we read these verses, from James. If you turn over to James, chapter 1, where we read there, was it page 1011, I think, in the Visitor's Bibles?

But look at James, chapter 1, and verse 13. Let no one say, when he's tempted, I'm being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted, with evil, and he himself, tempts no one.

Well that's pretty clear, isn't it? God tempts no one, to sin. And James goes on, in verse 14, to emphasize that. Each person is tempted, when he is lured, and enticed, by his own desires.

It's our own evil desires, that entice us, and that lure us. And if we incubate them, verse 15 says, it will lead down, a terrible road, to sin, and ultimately, to real disaster, to death.

[11 : 35] So what James is saying, is we can't blame God, for our own sinful desires, that tempt us, and that lead us astray. But then look back, to what James says, in verse 2.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials, of various kinds, of all kinds. Now that word trials, there is exactly the same word, as the word temptation.

The words is the same there, in verse 1 and 2, and in verse 13. And, it's the same word, in verse 12. Blessed is the man, who remains steadfast, under trial, or temptation.

Because when he stood the test, he will receive, the crown, of life. Now clearly, James is not contradicting himself, is he?

Just within the space, of a few verses. He's not saying, God does not send trials, and temptations to us, and then saying, that he does.

[12 : 32] He's not saying, be joyful, when God sends these things to you, and then saying, a few verses later on, oh God never does these things. No, he's not saying that at all. Of course not. What he's saying, is that God, never intends, such trial and temptations, that come into our lives.

Never intends them, for our evil, or for our loss, but for our good, and for our gain. That by testing, our faith, it may prove, our steadfastness.

Look at verse 3. It's for the testing, of your faith, that produces steadfastness, and when that has, its full effect, that is what leads us, to become perfect, and mature.

Mature in our faith, lacking nothing. So you see, what James is saying, is just what Jesus says, many times. Is that there are, two very different ways, to look at all the trials, and the temptations, and the troubles, that come in our lives.

There's a right way, and a wrong way. There's a right way, which sees these things, from God's heavenly perspective, and then there's the wrong way, which sees these things, only from our, earthly, sinful perspectives.

[13 : 44] And that's the contrast, isn't it, that we've seen, all the way through, Matthew chapter 6, where the Lord's prayer comes. And it's just another example, you see, of the prayer, that asks God, to help us, to see everything, from his heavenly perspective, not from our, clouded, earthly perspective.

We're praying, that God's name, would be hallowed, that God's kingdom, that God's will, would be honoured. And when we're praying that, with respect to temptation, we're saying that, that would be true, in this very specific, area of our life, this whole realm, of trial, and temptation.

Did you see, what we're really praying for, here in Matthew 6, verse 13. we're asking, to see all trials, and all temptations, with that heavenly, perspective, that James is talking about, and sees so clearly.

So that we will trust God, and overcome in such trials, and not blame God, and be overwhelmed, in these trials.

Now once again, like we did last time, put the word you, at the beginning, of verse 13. And it gives us the sense. You see, this is what we're praying. You Lord, lead us not, into temptation, that overwhelms us, to make us regress, and bring us defeat.

[15 : 08] That's never what you do. But you Lord, lead us through testing, to make us progress, to give us the victory. You Lord, deliver us, from the evil one.

You don't leave us, helpless pray to his wiles. And therefore, we are able to resist him, when he comes to us. You see, in a very real way, this prayer is also, a confession of faith.

It's a prayer of trust, in God. And to pray this in practice, really means two things, in the face, of trials and temptations. And I want us to think, about those two.

First of all, what we're asking for, is an attitude, attitude, not of arrogance, but of acceptance. Acceptance of our need, for God's help, in this whole area.

Now there's, there's two ways, that we can be arrogant, when we think about, trial and temptation. The first is, the arrogance of thinking, well, I'll never fall prey, to that particular temptation.

[16 : 14] We might look at somebody else, and we might hear of somebody, who's fallen into a terrible mess, and we think, well that's, that's not something, that I would ever fall prey to. And that's the self-conceit, isn't it?

That's the, the self-righteous attitude, of the Pharisee, that Jesus is attacking, all the way through this chapter. The hypocrite, who, who deludes himself, actually, even more than he deludes, and deceives other people.

And people who think like that, really are displaying the fact, that they have no idea, at all, about the real sinfulness, of sin. They haven't, really understood the reality, the terrible reality, of the human heart.

What does the Bible tell us? What does Jeremiah say? The heart is, deceitful above all things. And when he's saying that, he's not talking in the abstract, about the heart.

He's talking about your heart, and my heart. And we don't like to think that, and believe that. I suspect most of us here, probably think, I would never really be tempted, to steal.

[17 : 26] Or to be really dishonest. I'll never forget, talking to, a businessman, he used to be part of the church here. He was involved in a, a big retail chain.

And, and of course, the conversation, it came up, something about dishonesty, and embezzlement. And he told me about, the biggest case of embezzlement, that it ever faced, in their business. And they'd, been losing money, money had been disappearing, for a long period of time. And nobody quite knew, exactly where it was, disappearing, or how it was happening. And in the end, it turned out, to be, money that was being stolen, by a very proper, decent, middle-aged lady, who worked in the cash room.

She wasn't poor, she was actually quite well off, she wasn't in debt, she wasn't a gambler, she wasn't an alcoholic, there was nothing at all. And when she finally confessed, that she was the one, who'd been taking, siphoning off all of this money, over a period of time, they said, what on earth, made you do this?

And she said, I didn't need the money, but she said, just being in the presence, of so much cash, in front of me, all the time, I just could not resist, taking some of it.

[18 : 47] She was presented, with an opportunity, that most of us, aren't presented with, and she couldn't resist it. And you're sitting there, thinking, that would never happen to me.

Well, you think, I'm sure you mostly do, that you'd never cheat, on your husband, or your wife, and have an affair, with somebody in the office, or somebody, where you work with.

Really? The truth is that, most of us, simply perhaps, just don't have the opportunity. Maybe we don't have the looks, or the sex appeal, and if that's the case, we should thank God, shouldn't we? You know, it's very easy, for us as Christians, to be naive, and to think, that things that could happen, to other people, could never happen to us. But you know, that is, very often, just an arrogant, self, deceit, and conceit.

And Jesus, in telling us to pray this prayer, is saying to us, don't be arrogant. Don't be arrogant, except, that you need, God's help. You need to pray, Lord, lead me not, into temptation.

[20 : 10] And you need to be, determined, not to take steps, that will, contradict your prayers. But, that's only one way, to show arrogance, in the face of temptation.

There's a second way, and that's to say, well, it's all God's fault, when we're tempted. God let me be tempted, like this.

He put me into this situation. It's his fault. He led me here. It's not my fault. But no, he leads us not, into temptation, in that way.

Let no one say, I'm tempted by God, says James. It's your own, sinful desires, that you're allowing, to incubate, in a womb, of sinful thinking. Don't blame God.

You can never, blame God. The Apostle Paul, says the same thing, exactly, doesn't he, to the Corinthian church, in 1 Corinthians 10. No temptation, has overtaken you, that's not common, to everybody.

[21 : 06] God is not, unfaithful. He does provide, a way out, so you can, and you must flee, from idolatry. That's not an excuse, for sin, that's a, that's a stark warning, isn't it?

Don't blame God, he's shown you, what to do, to escape this, so flee from it, heed him, don't do it. So we mustn't be arrogant, in either of those ways, you see, but rather, we're to accept, that we

need God's help, because of our weakness.

We pray, Lord, lead us away, from falling, in these ways, not into, being overwhelmed, and engulfed, by temptation.

And you see, to ask that, is simply to, acknowledge, isn't it, that I'm not yet, sinless. It's to acknowledge, that I'm weak, that I'm vulnerable, that I need God's grace.

It's a mark, isn't it, of immature faith, often of new, Christian faith, to have great confidence, in ourselves. I've become a Christian, my life has changed, I've turned my back, on that.

[22:09] I will never fall, in that way again. And there's something, wonderful about the great joy, of that newfound confidence, in the Lord Jesus Christ, isn't there? And I don't want, to knock that, but here's the thing, it's a mark, of real maturity, in the Christian life, to become more, and more, and more aware, of just how weak, and how needy, of God's help you are.

The longer, I've been a Christian, the longer, and the more, I've learned, to appreciate, the words of that hymn, that we just sang, I need thee, oh I need thee, I need thee, every hour, and every minute.

I need to pray, Lord, lead me not, into temptation, because I'm not yet, sinless, and, because, I'm not yet, truly steadfast, either.

And so, as James makes clear, in those verses we read, God is still at work, in me, through many trials, and testings, of my faith, to produce steadfastness.

And so that, that steadfastness, will have, its full effect, so that at last, I will be complete, I will lack nothing. And that means, that God, isn't to be blamed, for the trials, in my life, although he had, an evil purpose, in them, but he's to be blessed, as he leads me, through all of these trials, because, what he tells me is, he's doing it, for a glorious purpose, to make me steadfast.

[23:40] So to pray like this, you see, as Jesus teaches us, is to pray, not like the attitude, of James chapter 1, verse 13, blaming God, but rather, it's to pray, with the attitude, of James chapter 1, verse 2, counting it all joy, blessing God, in the midst, of trial, it's to be accepting, of God's, help, and our need, for God's help, in our lives, to protect us, from sin, so that we won't, be overwhelmed, and to produce, in us, steadfastness, so that we will, at last, overcome, and all Christ's, apostles, teach the same thing, if you read, Peter's letter, what does he say, in first Peter, rejoice, amid grievous, trials, and temptations, why?

Because your faith, is being tested, by fire, and the result, will be praise, and glory, and honor, at the revelation, of the Lord Jesus, when he comes, Job is the great example, in the Bible, of that, isn't he?

In fact, Job is the very one, that James quotes, and talks about, the end of his letter, Job's friends, were arrogant, weren't they? they saw, all Job's trials, and temptations, only through that, earthly lens, with a completely, wrong perspective, so they either, blamed God, for what was happening, or they blamed Job himself, but Job is the one, that God vindicates, and says, my servant Job, was right, and you may remember, in Job chapter 23, in the midst, of the awful, grimness, of the darkness, of all that he was, going through, he showed supreme, acceptance, didn't he?

When he said of God, he knows, he knows the way, that I take, and when he has tried me, I will come forth, as gold, that's what praying, like this means, you see, when we say, Lord, lead us not, into temptation, we're asking, for that attitude, that attitude, not of arrogance, but of acceptance, acceptance, of our need, for God's help, in all these trials, and temptations, because, we're not yet sinless, and we're not yet steadfast, but God is working, in us, steadfastness, that will lead us, in his way, and will make us, mature, perfect, in faith, and secondly, you see, to pray like this, is also, to ask, for an attitude, not of despair, but of dependence, on the real provision, of God's grace, and all that he's promised us, Lord, you deliver us, from the evil one, it is a confession, of trust, that what God has promised,

God has done, through Jesus Christ, the Lord, and that first promise, in the Bible, way back in Eden, what was it? That the seed, of the woman, would crush, who?

[26:45] The evil one, the serpent, and in John chapter 12, do you remember, just on the eve, of our Lord's crucifixion, what did he say? Now, now, will the ruler, of this world, be cast out, and later on, the apostle John, tells us plainly, doesn't he, the reason, that the son of God, appeared, was to destroy, the works, of the devil, so when we pray, you see, Lord, deliver us, from the evil one, it's a confession, of faith, we're calling God, to do what he has done, we're calling on God, to make real, now, in our experience, what he has made real, forever, in time and history, through the death, and resurrection, of our Lord Jesus, and the destruction, of the power, of the evil one, you do deliver us,

you have delivered us, and so we will not despair, Lord, deliver us now, in this situation, remember, in first Peter chapter five, he calls, he calls the devil, our adversary, prowling around, seeking who he can destroy, who he can devour, doing everything he can, to oppose, our faith, and our trust, in everything that God's doing, in our lives, all that God purposes for us, he's prowling around, through all kinds, of trial and testing, but in the midst of that,

God is ordering everything, to make us steadfast, to make us mature, to make us complete, but the devil is our adversary, he wants to oppose, all our progress as Christians, he wants to oppose, everything, that God is doing in us, by his spirit, but he's not just, our adversaries, he's also, the Bible tells us, our accuser, he doesn't just want, to oppose everything, that God is doing in us, he wants to undermine, our assurance, of everything, that God has decisively, done for us, the accuser, that's what he's called, isn't it, in Revelation chapter 12, the accuser, of the brethren, who accuses them, day and night, before God, accusing, to undermine, our trust, in what God has done, once and for all, and forever, in our lives, to undermine, our sense, of the forgiveness, that is ours, in the Lord Jesus, who's taken away, our sin, and our guilt forever, who has declared us, forever, at peace with God, and it's true, you see, we're not yet sinless, we do still sin, but if we need, a constant reminder, that we have,

Christ's strength, at work in us, we also, we also need, a constant reminder, don't we, that we always, always have, Christ's sacrifice, at work for us, that he has, delivered us, forever, and that he will, go on delivering us, from the evil one, because the dominion, of the evil one, over our lives, has been broken, forever, so we don't despair, however, assaulted we are, by the enemy, however much, his accusations, might try to undermine, that assurance, that we have, to make us feel, all over again, that burden of guilt, upon us, that weighs us down, a crushing burden, I wonder if you, sometimes feel that, at times, I'm sure you have, I certainly have, to feel crushed, again, by a sense, of the burden, of your own sinfulness, us, but the Lord Jesus, says no, we depend, on the real promises, of God's grace, the promises, of God's grace, and salvation, that are ours, forever, in Jesus Christ, he has destroyed, the devil, he has delivered, all of us, who are subject, to lifelong slavery, and so our prayer, is Lord, you deliver us, from the evil one, we depend on you, do as you promised, assure us, once again, deliver us, from him today, silence these taunts, crush these accusations, remind us, that his power, is broken, remind me, that his power, is broken over me, that's what Jesus, is telling us, to pray, you see, there's a wonderful, wonderful, illustration, that you may remember, in the prophet,

Zechariah, chapter three, of that prophetic book, read it later on, the prophet, has a vision, of Joshua, the high priest, and he's standing, before the Lord, being accused, by Satan, and he represents, all of God's people, being accused, and he's standing there, in filthy rags, representing his sin, and the sinfulness, of God's people, and the prophet, then hears, an incredible voice, and the voice says, the Lord, rebuke you, Satan, he is mine, and he sees, all these filthy rags, being taken away from him, and beautiful, white linen, clothing him, so that he's perfect, in the sight of God, and not filthy, and that's what it means, to pray this prayer, you see, it's to pray, the Lord rebuke you, oh Satan, but because we depend, on him, and he says, that we're his forever, Lord deliver us, from the evil one, remind us, of this wonderful truth, that you have delivered us, it's not a cry, of despair, this prayer, it's a wonderful, expression of faith, and of trust, and of confidence, and dependence, on God, and that's why James, you see, who understands this, so well, can say, in chapter 4, of his letter, resist the devil, and he will flee, from you, he will flee, from you, he must, because God, has delivered us, from him, and we can't, deliver ourselves, of course, we're weak, we're very easily, tempted, but God can, and God has, and so if we ask God, he will, he will make it real, in our experience, today, in our daily experience, and we depend, on him, to do so, so James says, submit yourself, to God, resist the devil, and he will flee, from you, draw near to God, and he will, draw near to you, don't despair, depend, on the real promise, of God's grace, you deliver us, from evil, that's what it means, to pray this, to pray, deliver us, from the evil one, we're saying, [33 : 37] Lord, you, you lead us, not into temptation, but you deliver us, from the evil one, we're asking for, but we're also acknowledging, the reality, of God's wonderful protection, you see, if we pray that way, if we pray, with real acceptance, not with arrogance, and if we pray, with real dependence, on God, not a despair, of ourselves, then we'll find, that our trials, won't make us, into bitter Christians, who are always, blaming God, but rather, they'll do what God, intends, they'll make us, into better Christians, who are always, blessing God, because we know, that the testing, of our faith, in that way, produces steadfastness, and we're welcome, with joy, all God's, shaping of our

lives, in those ways, just as James, tells us to, because it is, working in us, God's will, and his purpose, and it's God's way, of leading us, to that crown of life, that he's promised, for all, who are his, and we'll find, that our temptations, you see, won't result, in our destruction, and our despair, but more, and more, will result, in our deliverance, for these things, that beset us, as we're led, again and again, to the truth, that's in Jesus, the truth, that's summed up, in our Lord's words, to poor, weak, wayward,

Simon Peter, do you remember, after he confessed, to Christ, and Jesus, tells him, that that means, that he must go, to the cross, and die, and Simon, tries to stop him, and opposes him, and Jesus has to say, oh get behind me, Satan, what a terrible thing, but Jesus says this, do you remember, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded, to have you, that he might, sift you like wheat, but, but, I have prayed for you, that your faith, will not fail, and you know friends, the wonderful thing, is that's not just true, for Simon Peter, it's not just true, of Christ's apostles, for whom he prayed, exactly that, in the upper room, the night before, he was crucified, father keep them, from the evil one, do you remember, those wonderful words, I pray not only, for them, but for all, who will believe, through their testimony, who's that, it's you and me, it's everyone, who's come to know, the Lord Jesus Christ, through the gospel, the apostles proclaimed, it's true, for every single one, who knows our father, in heaven, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and so we can pray, with absolute trust, father lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us, also, from the evil one, as you have promised, to do, and as our great savior,

Jesus has prayed, that you will do, lead us, not into temptation, but deliver us, from the evil one, well let's pray, together, indeed Lord, we do pray, surround us, surround us Lord, with your protection, for we are weak, and we are tempted, and the evil one, is ever near us, but may your truth, our deliverance be, deliverance, from his lies, to your wonderful liberty, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.