

Asking for God's Protection

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Date: 26 March 2017

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles now for our readings this evening. We're going to read in two places. First of all, in the letter of James in chapter 1. If you have one of the blue church Bibles, that's page 1011, 1011.

And then we turn back to Matthew chapter 6 for these verses of the Lord's Prayer. So we're going to read in James chapter 1 the first four verses and then verses 12 to 15.

And I think you'll see why when we read the content of these verses and then read Matthew 6. Page 1011, James chapter 1 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 know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect.

[1 : 0 9] That you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Verse 12. 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 or put under trial, 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, his own heart desire.

And then desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin. And sin, when it's fully grown, brings forth death.

Let's turn back to Matthew chapter 6 and the words of the Lord Jesus. At verse 9.

[2 : 1 5] You then pray like this, says the Lord Jesus to his followers. 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. Or better as the footnote has it, I think. Deliver us from the evil one. Amen.

May God bless to us his word. Amen. Well, do take your Bible and turn with me to Matthew chapter 6, page 811 in the church Bible.

And stick a finger in James chapter 1 as well, page 1011. We'll be going quite a little bit into James this evening. How do we pray?

[3 : 1 9] Well, we ask for God's protection. We saw last time that to ask for God's provision is to acknowledge that provision.

It's to thankfully accept his provision and be content with his provision. God's bread. God's way, not our way. That's the message.

We trust in him for daily food, daily bread. That is everything we need for earthly life. And we trust in him for daily forgiveness. That is really all that we need for eternal life.

We trust in him for all things. And the next petition that we're looking at this evening here in verse 13 is similarly both an ask and an acknowledgement. We ask for God's protection.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, the evil one. And we ask for that because we're acknowledging that we need his protection.

[4 : 25] And, of course, also because we're promised that protection from the Lord himself. And it's a petition, isn't it, that recognizes our weakness and our humble dependence on our heavenly father in this area of life as in all things in life.

Look at the very last verse there of Matthew chapter 5. Jesus says that we are to be perfect, complete, even as our heavenly father is perfect and complete.

Now, how on earth can that be unless God himself gives us of his own perfect righteousness? Unless he blesses us with heaven's ways.

But, of course, that is precisely the message of his grace, isn't it? That's the message of the Beatitudes, the beginning of Matthew chapter 5. What does Jesus say? Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. For the very thing they don't have. But they, says Jesus, will be filled because God gives of his grace.

[5 : 30] His perfect righteousness to those he loves. And that's what this petition here in verse 13 reminds us as well. It's the very opposite, again, as is everything in the Lord's prayer.

The very opposite of religious hypocrisy and pride. Rather, it's the humble prayer of those who know that our heavenly father sees us and knows our true hearts.

And therefore, he knows our needs. And also, he will answer our needs. And therefore, we pray, Lord, in our weakness.

When we're caught up in trials and temptations, we need your leading. Lord, in our frailty, when we're caught up in our sin, we need your deliverance.

We need you. Lead us not into temptation. The word temptation there is a general word. It really means not just temptation, but trials and testings of all kinds, just as we read in James chapter 1.

[6 : 35] Not just temptations to do wrong things. It's every kind of trial and testing. Lead us not into that. But rather, deliver us from evil.

Or really better, I think it is, as the footnote has it, the evil one. Back in chapter 5 and verse 37. And here, you'll see there's a footnote that says we could translate it either way.

But later on in Matthew's Gospel, in chapter 13, verse 19. You remember in the parable of the sower, Jesus talks about the evil one coming and doing this. It can't really be translated any other way.

It must be the evil one. And in chapter 17, verse 15, that we read at the beginning. Again, it's the evil one that Jesus prays for protection from.

And evil really always is personal. Behind every evil is the evil one. And we're to pray, lead us not into temptation and testing.

[7 : 34] And deliver us from the evil one. Lead us not is a way of speaking. It's called a latotes. It's just an emphatic way of saying, do the very opposite.

Not that, but this. Lead us not into that kind of testing under the evil one so that we are engulfed by it.

But rather, lead us away from it so that we triumph over it. I think that's really the sense of it. Now, we need to be careful here, don't we?

Because we might sense a problem. How does this seem to fit with Jesus' teaching that his followers will inevitably face trials and tribulations of many kinds?

In the world, you will have tribulation, Jesus says in John 16. So how can he be saying to us here, well, lead us not into that? Well, the clue, of course, is what Jesus went on to say there in John 16.

[8 : 33] He says, in the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. For I have overcome the world. I have overcome. And that implies, you see, that these trials, these temptations, these tribulations, though they must come and though they will come, there can be two very different ways of looking at these things and approaching these things.

And two very different outcomes in our lives and in our hearts, depending on which way we view them. And we need to understand that if we're going to understand what Jesus is really teaching us to pray here in this petition.

Turn over to James chapter 1, where we read earlier, because I do think it helps us to get this clear. Look at James 1 and verse 13. Let no one say when he is tempted, I'm being tempted by God.

For God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. Now that's very clear, isn't it? God tempts no one to sin. Verse 14 says that's our fault, not God's fault.

It's our own evil desires, our heart desires that entice us, that lure us. And if we incubate them, verse 15 says, it leads to a road of sin that ultimately does lead to disaster, leads to death.

[9 : 57] That's what happens. And we can't blame God, says James, for our own self-made sinful desires that tempt us, that lead us astray, that lead us down the road to destruction.

We can't blame God. But now look at verse 2. Can't it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds?

That's the same word, trials and temptations. It's the same word there in verse 2 as it is in verse 13. And also in verse 12. Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, under temptation, under testing.

Now clearly James is not contradicting himself, is he, within just a few verses. He's not saying that God does send trials and temptations on us in verse 2, and then in verse 13 saying, no, he doesn't.

Of course he's not. But what he is saying is that God never intends, God never purposes such trials and temptations for evil, but for good.

[11 : 00] That by testing our faith, he might produce, as verse 3 says, steadfastness. And that steadfastness might work in us full maturity, the completeness, the perfection that God has destined us for.

And so what he's saying is that there are two very different ways to look at all the trials, the tribulations, the temptations that we will face in our earthly lives. There's a right way that sees God's heavenly perspective and what he is doing and purposing in these things.

And there's a wrong way that sees things only from our own earthly perspective, only from our own sinful, faulty perspective. And that's the contrast, isn't it, as we've seen all the way through Matthew chapter 6.

The whole chapter is about seeing things with two very different eyes. Merely an earthly eye or a heavenly eye. Merely from our view or from God's view. Merely from our view.

That all such trials and temptations. See them from a heavenly perspective that James sees so clearly there.

[12 : 36] So that we will trust God and overcome in these trials. And not blame God and be overwhelmed by our trials. We're asking to see with that heavenly perspective.

So that we trust God and overcome in the midst of these things, which will come upon us in life. Not blame God and be overwhelmed by them. Two totally different ways of seeing trial and temptation.

Again, put a you in front of the sentence. And I think it gives the sense. You lead us, Lord, not into temptation that would overwhelm us.

To make us regress. To bring defeat in our lives. But you lead us through testing that makes us progress. And that gives us victory.

You deliver us, Lord, from evil and from the evil one. You don't leave us helpless as prey to his wiles. You are able to help us to resist his advances.

[13 : 41] And to make him flee. See, it is a confession of faith. It's a confession in that prayer of trust in God. Asking what he has promised to give us. So, in practice then.

To ask for this. To pray in this way. Is to ask two things. In the face of life's trial and temptations. First, we are to ask God for an attitude.

Not of arrogance. But of acceptance of our need for God's help. Not of arrogance thinking we don't need help. But of acceptance. That we do need God's help.

And there's two ways, I think, to be arrogant in the face of trial and temptation. The first one is to think, well, I'll never sink into that temptation of sin. That's not something that could ever floor me.

I'm immune to that sort of thing. And that's the self-confident attitude. That's the self-righteous attitude of the Pharisee. That Jesus is constantly condemning. The hypocrite.

[14 : 41] Who's actually deluding himself just as much as he's deluding others. People who think like that. That they could never fall into that particular sin. They just have no idea.

Of the depth of the sinfulness and the power of sin in the human heart. They just don't understand their own hearts. Never mind anybody else's. What does the Bible say about the heart? It's deceitful above all things.

Above all things. No more deceitful thing in the universe than your heart or mine. Jeremiah 17 verse 9. You think you could never steal? Never be dishonest?

I remember when a businessman who used to worship with us here in the city. He was the head of a very large retail store in Glasgow. And he told me that the biggest embezzlement that he'd ever come across in his work situation was from a very proper, very decent, middle-aged lady.

She wasn't poor. She wasn't in debt. She wasn't a gambler. There was nothing at all like that in her life. No reason at all for her to steal. But she worked in the cash room.

[15 : 54] And just the sheer proximity to all that money, day in, day out, gave her an opportunity that she couldn't resist. She couldn't resist stealing.

And when she was caught, that's what she said. Just being around all that money, it was just too much for me. I couldn't resist it. You think you could never do that? Try spending week after week after week, day after day, sitting in the middle of piles of money.

You think you could never cheat on your husband or your wife with somebody at the office, somebody at work, or somebody in the church even. You think you could never do that? Let's be honest.

What stops most of us is simply lack of opportunity, perhaps lack of looks and self-appeal, sex appeal. Maybe next time you look in the mirror and you look at yourself and you kind of wince, maybe you should say, thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Lord. But friends, seriously, many Christians are very, very naive.

[17 : 01] Don't think. Don't think that you are immune to temptation, that you could never fall that way. For others, it's more often just arrogance and conceit.

And Jesus says, don't be arrogant. Don't be conceited. Accept that you need God's help. You need to pray. Lead us not to temptation. And you need to make sure that your own steps don't take you in the opposite direction and contradict your prayers.

Prayers that pray one thing while you're walking in the other direction aren't real prayers, are they? That's the double-minded person that James talks about. But there's a second way, I think, to show arrogance about temptation.

And it's to say, well, it's all God's fault when we're tempted. He let me be tempted like this. It's his fault. He led me here. Blame God. But no, James says, God does not lead us into temptation that way.

Let no one say, I'm tempted by God. Let no one say it's God's fault. It's your own fault. It's your own sinful desires that you're incubating in a womb of sinful thinking.

[18 : 16] That's your problem. Don't blame God. Don't blame God. You can never blame God when you fall. Paul says exactly the same thing in 1 Corinthians 10. You remember, no temptation has overtaken you, he says, that isn't common to man.

God isn't unfaithful. He provides a way out. So take the way out. Flee from idolatry. Paul's not giving an excuse to sin in that verse. Sometimes people think that's what it is.

Oh, God will always just rescue you if you go right to the edge. Sail as close to the wind as you can. Nonsense. He's saying the very opposite. He's saying you've got no excuse. God's given you a way out.

Obey him. Flee from idolatry. Don't blame God. He's shown you what to do. Heed him. Do it. Listen to what he says. Don't dare to be arrogant in that way.

We mustn't be arrogant in either of these ways. Either thinking we're immune or, if we do, find ourselves falling into temptation, blaming God. Rather, we are to accept that we need God's help because of our weakness.

[19 : 18] And we're all weak. And we're to pray, Lord, lead us away and not into temptation and trial. And you see, to ask that is just to acknowledge, isn't it, that I am not yet sinless.

That I'm weak. That I'm vulnerable. That I need God's grace. It's a mark of immature faith, isn't it? To feel great confidence in yourself. It's often a thing of a new Christian in the first flush of faith.

I'll never do those things ever again. It's a mark of maturity, isn't it, to realize. Just how weak we really are.

Isn't that right? Those of you who have been walking with the Lord for many years, many decades. Aren't you more aware now of your weakness and sinfulness than you were 30, 40, 50 years ago? Of course you are. The longer I've been a Christian, the more I appreciate the words of that old hymn that we sang.

I need thee every hour. Every hour I need thee. Not an hour goes by. I don't need the restraining grace of God. I need to pray.

[20 : 25] Lead me not into temptation because I'm not yet sinless. And because I'm not yet steadfast either in the way James wants us to be.

And so as James makes clear, God is still at work in me through many trials, many testings of my faith to produce steadfastness. So that steadfastness will ultimately have its full effect and that I will be at last complete and lacking nothing, as James says in chapter 1, verse 4.

And that means God isn't to be blamed for trials in my life as though they had an evil purpose. No. He is to be blessed for the trials in our lives.

Because he's leading us through all these trials and temptations for a glorious purpose. Steadfastness. Completeness. And you see, to pray like that is to cherish not the attitude of James 1, verse 13, blaming God.

But it's to cherish the attitude of James 1, verse 2, to count it all joy, to bless God. It's to be accepting of God's help in our lives, which we need.

[21 : 38] To protect us from sin so that we're not overwhelmed by sin. And to produce in us steadfastness, which will at last overcome and win us the crown of life.

That's a consistent theme in Scripture. Peter says the same thing in his first letter. Rejoice, he says, when grievous trials and temptations come upon you. Why? Because your faith is being tested by fire.

That the result will be praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Just the same thing. Job is a great example in the Old Testament, isn't he?

His friends, of course, are arrogant. They saw his trials only in that wrong earthly perspective. They either blamed God and said God was to blame and Job should curse God.

Or they blamed Job and said he should repent. That's all they could see. They were arrogant about it. But Job, it's amazing, isn't it? In the midst of his terrible misery and darkness, Job showed that supreme acceptance and trust.

[22 : 45] He knows the way that I take, he said. When he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Job 23 verse 10. That's the attitude that Jesus is saying that we must pray for.

And that's what praying like this means. We're to ask for that attitude, not of arrogance, but of acceptance. Acceptance of our need constantly for God's help in all trials and in all temptations because we're not yet sinless.

We need him. And because we're not yet steadfast. God is working steadfastness in us as we humbly seek his way. And seek his leading.

So that's the first thing. We're to seek acceptance, not arrogance. And secondly, to pray like this is to ask for an attitude not of despair, but of dependence on the real provision of God's grace.

You deliver us from the evil one. That's a confession of trust. What God has promised to us, he has done through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[23 : 54] The first promise right back in Eden, Genesis 3.15, remember? It was that the seed of the woman would crush the evil one decisively, forever, completely.

And in John 12 verse 31, when Jesus was going to the cross, when he faced his crucifixion, he said, Now, now at last, will the ruler of this world be cast out.

And John says wonderfully those words in 1 John 3, The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. To destroy the evil one and his hold.

So, you see, when we pray, deliver us from the evil one, it's a confession of faith. It's calling God to do what he has done. To make real in our personal experience what is real in time and in history through Jesus Christ.

It's to proclaim, you do deliver us. And you have delivered us. And so we will not despair. Though Satan assail us from every side.

[24 : 59] Do you remember in 1 Peter chapter 5, Peter calls the devil our adversary. Prowling round like a lion, seeking whom he may devour. Doing everything they can to oppose faith and trust in what God is doing in our lives amid many trials.

That all that God is purposing in us. There are all sorts of trial and testing. All that God is allowing to come upon us to make our faith steadfast and mature and complete.

And the devil is prowling around. Trying to devour us in the midst of that. And blind us to what God is doing. And make us despair. And think that God has abandoned us and is giving us up.

He's our adversary. He wants to oppose your progress as a Christian believer. He wants to oppose what God is doing in our lives.

And he's also an accuser, seeking to undermine our assurance as Christians. In what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. That's what he's called, isn't he, in Revelation chapter 12.

[26 : 00] The accuser of the brethren. Who accuses them day and night before God. Who's accusing to undermine in our hearts the truth about what God has done.

What he has once and for all done forever. In forgiving us our sins through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who took our sins away forever and ever as far as the east is from the west.

Who declared us forever to be at peace with God. Reconciled with God. Standing by his grace. It's true of course we're not yet sinless.

We do still sin. But we need a constant reminder, don't we? That God's strength is at work in us. In Christ. And so also we need a constant reminder that we have Christ's sacrifice at work for us.

He has delivered us. And he'll go on delivering us. And keep delivering us from the evil one. Because the dominion of the evil one over our lives has been broken.

[27 : 05] And so we don't despair. However assaulted we might be by our enemy, by our adversary. However his accusations might undermine our assurance.

Make us feel our guilt all over again. Do you sometimes feel that? That all over again you feel a crushing burden. Because of the guilt of your sin.

That's the accuser of the brethren. Accusing you. And Jesus says no. Excuse me. We depend on the real promises of God's grace.

Grace that is ours in Jesus Christ. He has destroyed the devil. Says Hebrews chapter 2. And he has delivered. All of those who are subject to his slavery.

Lord you deliver us. From the evil one. We depend on you to do what you promised to do. Deliver us from him today. This is what we're praying.

[28 : 04] Silence his taunts. Crush his accusations. Remind him that his power is broken. Remind him that his power is gone. Over those who are children of God.

That's what we're praying when we pray this prayer. There's that wonderful picture isn't there? In the prophet Zechariah. In Zechariah chapter 3. Where there's the vision of Joshua.

The high priest. Standing before God. And Satan. Accusing him. And then accusing him. He's accusing all of God's people. And that wonderful word comes.

The Lord rebuke you. Oh Satan. See he is mine. And he removes. The filthy rags from Joshua the high priest.

And clothes him instead in pure robes. Perfect. In the sight of God. And you see. That's what this prayer means. It's saying. The Lord rebuke you.

[29 : 01] Oh Satan. Because we depend on him. And he says that we're his forever. And we are his forever. So we can say.

Lord. Deliver us. From the evil one. It's not a cry of despair. To pray that prayer. It's a cry of faith. Of trust. Of confidence. Of dependence. On our God.

That's why James says later on. In James 4 verse 7. Resist the devil. And he will flee from you. He must flee from you. Because God has delivered us from him. We can't deliver ourselves.

Of course. But God can. And God has. And so we ask him. To keep on making that real. In our experience.

Day by day by day. As we face many trials and temptations. We depend on him to do so. We need him. Every hour. But he promises that that is what he will do.

[30 : 00] Submit yourselves to God. Says James. 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 promises. Of God's grace. That's what it means to pray. Deliver us from the evil one. Yes Lord.

You lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. We ask for and we acknowledge God's gracious protection. Acknowledge we need it.

And we ask because he's promised to give it. And if we pray this way with real acceptance. Not with arrogance. And with real dependence.

Not in despair. There. Then you see we'll find that our trials. Make us not bitter Christians. Always blaming God.

[31 : 01] But better Christians. Who are always blessing God. Because we know. That the testing of our faith. That he allows in our lives.

Produces steadfastness. And so we're welcome with joy. All. God's gracious shaping of our lives. Even through many trials and temptations.

Snares. Dangerous. Things that will bring us great struggles. And we'll find that our temptations then won't result. In our destruction.

In our despair. But rather in our deliverance. As we're led again and 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? Simon, Simon. Behold, Satan has demanded to have you.

[31 : 54] That he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you. That your faith may not fail. And we read at the beginning of the service, didn't we?

From John chapter 17. Where Jesus prayed exactly the same. For all who are his. Lord, my father. Keep them. From the evil one. Not just from these.

But all who will believe through their testimony. That's you and me. And everyone who loves the Lord Jesus Christ. And calls him Lord. And follows him. Friends, because that's true.

All who know the father through the Lord Jesus Christ. Can pray with absolute trust. Father, lead us not into temptation.

But deliver us from evil. So let's be prayers. Of that prayer.

[32 : 57] Every single day. Of our lives. Amen. Let's pray. Surround us, Lord. With your protection. For weak we are. And tempted. The evil one is ever near us.

May your truth deliverance be. From his lies. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty.

Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty.

Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty. Liberty.