

**Lead Us Not into Temptation, Prayer (Part 10)**

**Matthew 6:13**

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You know, there are some events in life that you just don't want to end. I'm sure you've had the experience, as I have of those special times with family that you hope will just continue to last. Perhaps, it's listening to beautiful music that almost transports our souls into the very presence of God. Perhaps, it's beholding some beauty in the creation of God as you watch the sunset, or you see the sunrise. You just want those moments to last. I have to confess to you that I've felt that way in our study of The Lord's Prayer. We come this morning to the end of a 2 ½-month journey studying these magnificent words from the mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I really don't want it to end. But it does, and it ends on a high note, as I hope you will see before we're done this morning.

Those of you who are visiting with us, or perhaps you have come in the last week or so, you have missed a rich study starting the first Sunday in January and going through this magnificent prayer of our Lord's, looking at each petition in great detail. Today, we come to the end. Let's read it again together. You follow along as I read, Matthew 6:9,

“Pray, then, in this way; ‘Our Father who is 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 do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, Amen.]”

As we've looked at this great prayer, we've realized that our Lord teaches us here to lead our prayers into six great paths, six categories which characterize the life of prayer. The first three have to do with God. We are to pray that God's Name would be hallowed. That God, in all that He is, would be set apart as holy in our lives and in the lives of others. We are to pray that God's kingdom would come, that is, that His kingdom, His spiritual kingdom would be advanced in our hearts and in the hearts of others; and that His literal, future, earthly kingdom would come to fruition. We are to pray that His will would be done. That is, that both we and others would gladly accept His sovereign will and purpose for our lives, and that we would discipline ourselves to pursue His revealed will as it's recorded for us in the Word of God.

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The second three petitions that we've been looking at over the last several weeks takes us to ourselves, to what we should pray about concerning us. We're told that we are to pray for the needs of this life, that we're to pray for the forgiveness of sin, and that we're to pray regarding growth and holiness. Verse 11 says, "Give us this day our daily bread." This petition deals with all the physical needs of life. We are to pray for food and shelter and clothing and health and jobs and all of those things that are required to sustain life here in this world. Then the fifth and sixth petitions deal with the spiritual needs of this life.

Then we finish our Lord's Prayer today with the last request. "Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil." That is, at its core, a prayer for personal holiness. We've been commanded as believers to pursue holiness. You'll remember those words of Peter, quoting those magnificent words from the book of Leviticus where he says in his first epistle: "like the holy one Who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, you shall be holy for I am holy."

Every Christian has been made for this purpose. We were designed to be like Jesus Christ, and to reflect His glory. If you're here this morning, and you're a Christian, then God saved you, in the words of Paul, "He predestined you, in order that you might be conformed to the image of His Son." Because God has a plan way beyond you and way beyond me, and that is that those of us whom He has redeemed, who bear the likeness of His Son, would shine forth the glory of His Son, both now and into eternity. This is God's purpose. It's His design, and this process of becoming like Christ, of becoming holy, has begun if you're a believer. By God's grace, you and I are not what we used to be. At the moment of salvation, an amazing transformation took place.

We were made a new creature in Christ through what theologians call "regeneration". We were given a new disposition, a new principle of life which longs to obey God and to imitate Him. That process called "sanctification" began, as we've been studying the last few Sunday nights, it began at the very moment of conversion. But, while we're not what we used to be, we are not yet what we want to be, or even what we ought to be. In fact, as we learned last week in the fifth petition, Jesus taught us to recognize that reality daily; to acknowledge that we have gathered about our feet, as it were, the dirt of sin, and that we need our feet to be washed; that we need to seek daily the cleansing and forgiveness of God. And so, we're not yet perfectly holy, and we will not be in this life. So, in this final request, Jesus tells us that we are to pray for real personal growth in holiness.

To help us unpack what our Lord is teaching here, I want us to address three issues. First of all, we're going to look at the problem with holiness. Secondly, the prerequisites of holiness, and finally the prayer for holiness itself. So, let's take those three.

Let's start with the first, the problem with holiness. Included in this verse 13 is an acknowledgment that we are not, in fact, what we ought to be; that there is a life and death struggle going on in our souls. Jesus describes our problem, the problem that keeps us from holiness, in a single word. It's the word "temptation". Here is the chief enemy of our souls: temptation. Now this Greek word can mean one of two different things, and it's used both ways in the New Testament. This word can refer to an external test or trial, a test sent from God which comes to us for the good purposes of demonstrating that we do have faith. Improving and strengthening the quality of our faith, that's a trial. We learned about trials in James 1. We learned that we are to embrace them. They serve God's purposes in our lives. That's one way this word can be translated and used.

But there's a second way this word can be used, and it has to do with a solicitation to sin. A trial is a positive thing, intended for our good. A temptation is a negative thing, intended to cause us to sin. According to James, we are to rejoice in our trials. We are to embrace them. But here in Matthew, whatever it is that our Lord is describing, we want to avoid at all costs. Lord, lead us away from that. Don't lead us into this. So, the translators correctly chose the English word "temptation". He's not dealing with trials here, He's dealing with solicitation to sin. Temptation is the great enemy of holiness. But where does this great enemy of our souls come from? What is the source of temptation, or more accurately, what are the sources of temptation. This is what we struggle with. This is why you and I are not as holy as we ought to be. It falls to the issue of temptation. Where do these temptations come from? What are the sources? Well the Bible tells us that there are three sources from which temptation comes. There are three parts of this problem with holiness that we have.

First of all, temptations come from our own hearts. From what the Bible calls our flesh. When we were saved, we were made a new person, a new creation in Christ Jesus, as Paul says. We were regenerated, made new. The old person that we used to be died, and we were made a new person in Christ. But we retain a part of us that is still yet unredeemed. And the Bible calls that part of us our flesh. We are stuck with the flesh throughout this life. It's not, strictly speaking, the body, but it finds its beachhead in our bodies that are yet unredeemed. The fortress which temptation to sin takes in our hearts, the fortress of evil inside of us, is in our flesh. We have a serious problem inside. Years ago, I read the comic strip character, Togo. Some of you didn't

know I read the comics, but occasionally I do, and I read the comic strip character, Togo, and he said this, (paraphrasing words from history, and he said this,) “we have met the enemy, and it is us.” That’s exactly right. That’s good theology. We have met the enemy, and it is us. Technically, it should be it is we, for you grammarians, but you get the point.

Moving from Togo to the great church father Augustine, Augustine put it this way: “Lord, deliver me from myself”. You understand that. You’re a believer, you understand that struggle. Deliver me from myself. Or in the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 7. “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” You see, our biggest problem with holiness doesn’t come from outside. It comes from within.

Jesus presents this very clearly. Turn over a few pages to Mark. Mark 7, He’s having to deal with the Pharisees as He so often did in His earthly ministry, and they’re concerned that His disciples had not washed their hands before they ate, and therefore they were defiled. Defiled before God, and Jesus wants them to understand that that’s not the real issue here. And so, in verse 20, ... He was saying, it’s not what goes into the man that defiles him, but it’s,

“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, [and] fornications, and thefts, and murders, and adulteries, deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, *and* foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within, and they are what defile the man.”

You see, your real problem isn’t what’s on the outside. Your greatest problem, and my greatest problem is what resides within. Even as a new creature in Christ, this is still true.

You remember our study in James 1 where James is talking about the issue of temptation? And he says, listen, when you’re tempted, don’t blame God. Don’t say God did this to me. Instead, he says in verse 14, Everyone is tempted when he is carried away and enticed, by what, his own craving. The word is “lust”, but that sounds a lot like sexual sin. It certainly includes that, but it’s much, much broader. The Greek word has the idea of a strong intense craving. We are carried away and enticed by our own cravings. There’s where our problem lies. Do you understand that? Do you appreciate the fact that temptation rises up from within you because of those cravings that are a part of your fallenness? A part of that unredeemed part of you? There’s another source of temptation that we don’t think about very often. And that’s Satan. Satan. There is, regardless of American surveys to the contrary, a being of unimaginable evil,

who, along with the fallen angels who serve him, are engaged in a constant effort to destroy the lives and souls of people. Understand this. Satan is active in our world. There is, in reality, a spiritual world swirling around us, in which there is a battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan. And sometimes temptation comes to us from those evil spiritual forces. It was true of unbelievers.

There's an interesting verse in Matthew 13:19. Jesus is telling the parable of the soils. And He says, you remember the soil where the seed of the gospel was sown, and it fell on rocky soil? He says, listen to this, when anyone hears the word of the kingdom, that is, the gospel, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. Do you understand that Satan and his demons are so much involved in the process of temptation that when an unbeliever hears the gospel, in ways that we don't fully understand, Satan comes and snatches that from his heart so that he doesn't grasp it, he doesn't understand it?

Perhaps it's like what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 4 where we're told the god of this world blinds the minds of those who believe lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them. But it's not just true of unbelievers. It was even true of Christ. You remember in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. It was Satan who tempted our Lord Jesus Christ. But it's also true of believers. If you think you're exempt from facing temptation that comes to you from the evil spiritual world that swirls around us, you are sadly mistaken. Let me give you a couple of examples. You remember toward the time of our Lord's crucifixion, He said this to Peter in Luke 22:31. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." Satan is after you, and he's demanded of God permission to destroy you. But I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. Satan was after Peter.

But what about ordinary believers. It's not just true of apostles. In Acts 5:3 we meet two lay people in the church in Jerusalem: Ananias and Saphira. And Ananias sold some land, and he and his wife wanted to give some of the money to the church. They wanted to keep some of the money, but they wanted to look more spiritual than they were, and so they decided to lie about it. They bring the money, and they say, we sold the property, this is the total amount we sold it for, because we are just so devoted to the Lord, we want to give this money to the church. And Peter says this, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it was yours, was it not your own? You could do with it whatever you wanted. Peter says Satan has tempted you in this decision you've made.

First Peter 5:8 Peter gives us a similar warning. To all of us who read his epistle, listen to what he says. “Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert.” [He’s talking to you. He’s talking to me. About what? He says because] “Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Part of the struggle we have in pursuing holiness is the work of Satan and his demons tempting us to sin.

By the way, it’s not that Satan himself comes and tempts you or me. Satan is not omnipresent. He can’t be everywhere at one time, and so he has to choose his targets carefully. None of us will probably ever end up on his radar screen. But he has so many demons, who can carry out his will, that it’s very possible, and very likely, that we will face temptation from that front. You see, there are two great dangers in dealing with Satan. One of them is to pay him too much attention and treat him as if he were sovereign, as if Satan were behind everything from the deepest human tragedy to a bad hair day. This is a big problem in the Charismatic movement. Satan is behind every bush, and he’s engaged in everything, and God’s nowhere to be seen. That’s not the picture of the New Testament. That’s not the picture of the Bible.

But in a Bible church like ours, the greater danger lies at the other extreme. And that’s acting as if Satan and his hordes don’t even exist. Get a grip on this reality. You live in a physical world, but you walk around and dwell in a spiritual world that swirls all around us. This is the picture God presents. God is still in charge. God is still in control. Nothing happens to us outside of His purpose and plan. But that doesn’t mean that there can’t come to us temptation from this front.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, perhaps you’ve read the story, was at times so aware of the reality of this spiritual world. In fact, if you read his great hymn *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* he talks about that struggle. At one point he became so aware, biographers record, that he was in his study, and he picked up an inkwell and threw it across the room at the devil. He was so certain that he was there, tempting him and distracting him from the work that God had called him to. We are so far from that. We have forgotten that that spiritual world even exists around us. There are times when temptation is thrown in front of us from the outside. Some of you have had occasions like this. Temptation comes from the outside. Some of you have had occasions like this. Temptation comes from the outside. It may well be the work of the demonic.

There’s a third source of temptation. Not only our own flesh and Satan, but thirdly, the Bible says a third attack that comes upon our souls is from the world. Now don’t misunderstand.

That's not talking about the people that are in the world. It's talking about the world's system. You see, Satan has organized a complex system of evil in the world that stands opposed to God. This system isn't a New Testament phenomenon. I think sometimes we're tempted to think it just sort of shows up in the New Testament. It was in the Old Testament as well. In fact, listen to Psalm 106:35. Speaking of the children of Israel, the psalmist says, "they mingled with the nations And learned their practices." Now, some of you who grew up in more legalistic type homes, when you think, "the world", you're thinking hair styles and music styles and clothes. That's not what this is talking about. This is talking about sin and idolatry and pursuing things that are contrary to the revealed will of God.

But this isn't just a problem for the Old Testament. This is a problem in the New Testament as well. It's a problem for us. Listen to James, in James 1:27. We looked at in detail. When he's laying out pure and undefiled religion, he says, here it is. Love those who are the neediest around you. The orphans and widows. And keep yourself unstained by the world. This is the essence of what we are to do as believers: to love, and to be holy. Part of the work of Christ on our behalf was to rescue us from the influence of this world system. In Galatians 1:4, "[Jesus] ... "gave Himself for us so that He might rescue us from this present evil age". Now what are we talking about when we talk about the world or the world's system? It's kind of hard for us to get our arms around.

But the most common manifestation of Satan's influence in the system that he's set up is described for us in 1 John 2, a very familiar passage, but I want you to turn there, 1 John 2. The apostle John has just given us in verses 12 - 14 a description of spiritual growth. How we mature from being spiritual babies to being young people to being adults, being fathers. And he ends that description in verse 14 by mentioning the evil one.

And that causes him to launch, in verse 15, into a description of the tactics of the evil one. Verse 15, stop loving the world. Now, again, he's not talking about people here. Get that out of your mind. He's talking about the system that Satan has established in the world. "nor the things that are in the world." [Again, not talking about music or food or clothes. He's talking about the parts of the system that Satan has established.] "If anyone loves ... [that], the love of the Father is not in him." [And now in verse 16, he's going to define it. Here's what worldliness is.] "For all that is in the world", [the system] "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life...."

You see, Satan has three great traps that are a part of the system he's created that continues to spin out of control all around us. It's composed of the cravings of the flesh, (here probably best translated the body) the cravings of the eyes, (wanting and possessing and having to have) and the boastful pride of life. That is, taking arrogant pride in who I am and what I've accomplished. Now, you think about that for a moment, and you will realize that those three things stand behind much of what happens in our world today. That is part of the system that Satan has created. Those are its manifestations. Satan is all about promoting these three great traps in the system that he has spawned.

When I was in seminary, I read what many believed to be John Bunyan's greatest book, even surpassing *Pilgrim's Progress*, the book called *The Holy War*. And in this book, which is another extended allegory, just as *Pilgrim's Progress* is, he describes an attack and siege of the city of Mansoul. You get the idea. Mansoul being each person's soul. And he describes this siege and attack carried out by the Prince Diabolus, or the devil. And in the end, the city of Mansoul can only be saved by King Immanuel. But, and I strongly encourage you to read it, it's a great book. But do you understand the reality that Bunyan was picturing? The human soul is under siege. Certainly it's true of unbelievers, but to a certain extent it's true of believers as well. Do you really believe that? Do you believe that right now as you sit here, this week as you leave this place and go out to school or the work place or wherever it is you are, that your soul, like the allegorical city of Mansoul in Bunyan's story, is under constant attack?

If you don't, then you will never understand the importance of this sixth petition. You will never pray "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". It's only as you understand the problem that you long for the solution. The main problem we have in pursuing holiness is temptation, and that temptation comes to us from our own flesh, from Satan and his emissaries, and from the world system that he designed and established. Now we have to understand that if we're going to pray this prayer.

But before we can pray this prayer in verse 13, we must also understand, secondly, the pre-requisites of holiness, the pre-requisites of holiness. There are three essential attitudes that must first reside in our hearts before you and I can genuinely pray this prayer. And all three of these attitudes are implied here in this verse. Three attitudes, three heart attitudes that promote holiness, and you and I must cultivate these attitudes before we can genuinely pray this prayer.

Attitude #1: a hatred of our sin. Notice, he says, lead us not, and rescue us. Now both of those phrases imply that we see the danger, and that we want out. There are so many people who don't

want out. They don't really want out. They don't really hate their sin. We are very tempted, too often, to play around with sin, to coddle it, to flirt with it. We are like the moth who thinks he can play with the flame until he plunges to his death. We need to develop the attitude of the psalmist, who urges us in Psalm 97, "Hate evil, you who love the Lord," Or Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil." Do you hate your sin? That's the starting place of holiness. Let me just encourage you to think very practically for a moment. Think about the sins that are your propensity. Think about that short list that comes immediately to each of our hearts when we think about our sin-struggles in this life. Do you really hate those sins? Do you really, can you pray with all of your heart, lead me not into those things, but deliver me from that evil. Do you hate them? God does.

How can you and I cultivate that kind of hatred of our sin? Well, we can look at Scripture and see what Scripture has to say about those sins and learn to think God's thoughts after Him as how He sees those things. We can also think about what those sins did to Christ. Have you ever thought about this? If you were the only person on earth and God wanted to bring you into proper relationship with Himself, Jesus would have to die for your sins. For those sins that are on that list you just made, and many others. Think about that, and it will help you develop a hatred of your sin. Plead with God to give you the same kind of holy hatred of your sin that He has. But this is foundational. To really be able to pray this prayer, you've got to come here, a hatred of sin.

There's a second attitude that promotes holiness: (Not only a hatred of sin, but a spirit of dependence. It's also implied here.) Remember that verse 13 is a prayer. It's part of a pattern of prayer that we are regularly to bring before our God, praying lead us not, and rescue or deliver us, implies that only God can effect true spiritual change. You know we've been studying on Sunday nights the fact that only God can truly change us. This prayer acknowledges that. God, I cry out to You to do what I can't do. Now, don't misunderstand, and I encourage you to get the series on sanctification. We've been learning that God changes us, and He's the only one who can, but we have to expend maximum effort, and it's as we expend maximum effort in pursuing obedience that God does what we can't do, and that is, changes our hearts. But we have to have this spirit-this spirit of dependence. It's the spirit of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5 where he says to the Thessalonians, Now may God Himself sanctify you entirely. John Calvin, in his commentary on this prayer says this.

"We conclude from this petition that we have no strength for living a holy life except so far as we obtain it from God. Whoever implores the assistance of God

to overcome temptations acknowledges that unless God deliver him, he will be constantly falling.” (It’s a spirit of dependence.)

But there’s a third pre-requisite to holiness (not only a hatred of sin and a spirit of dependence, and this is basic: a longing for holiness. You hear it in this prayer don’t you? Lead me not into temptation. Deliver me from evil. There’s a longing to be done with it. To be done with sin. Hebrews 12:14 says pursue holiness, or sanctification, depending on your translation. I love that because the word pursue is a beautiful word picture. It means to chase after. When Sheila and I lived in LA for 16 years, the news there is entertainment, much as it is here. But more so there because of the culture.

And one of the funniest parts, the most enjoyable parts of the news, for us, because we were safe, I felt for those police officers who were engaged in it, were the chases on the freeways. It seemed like every day there was some new spectacular chase, you know, where somebody would fill his car with gas and lead police on a chase for 3 hours at speeds upwards of 120 miles an hour, all over the freeway system. And then he would run out of gas, and as the car came to a stop, as it was still moving, the criminal would jump out of his car and take off on foot, and the police would have to continue the chase. That’s a great word picture of what Hebrews 12 says. Chase after holiness. There’s a longing. There’s a desire.

Spurgeon said that the clearest and most incontrovertible evidence that a man or a woman is truly in Christ is the desire for personal holiness. By the way, he didn’t mean simply a longing to be rid of a problem sin that’s an embarrassment and a trouble. That wasn’t even what he was talking about. He meant a genuine desire to be like Jesus Christ. Here, Jesus tells us to express that desire to our Father in these words. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” If you want to promote the pursuit of holiness in your life, then you must cultivate these essential attitudes that underlie this request: a hatred of sin, a spirit of dependence, and a longing for holiness.

Well we’ve seen the problem of holiness, the prerequisites of holiness. That brings us to the heart of the passage, and to the prayer for holiness. What is it exactly that Jesus is teaching us to pray for. Well, this petition has two sides. A negative side and a positive one. Let’s look at the negative first. Lead us not into temptation. As we’ve already discovered, the translators were correct in using the English word temptation, a solicitation to evil. And the word “lead” literally means to bring or to carry, and that’s how it’s translated in the rest of the New Testament. Sometimes it even has the idea of to compel by force. For example, Jesus told His disciples that

they would be brought into the courts. So, in other words, we could rephrase it like this. Don't "bring us, or carry us, or compel us by force, into temptation". Now, if you know your Bible, that should immediately raise a question. Why do we need to pray that? I thought this was already true. God never leads us into temptation. I mean, doesn't James 1:13 say, Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God, for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself doesn't tempt anyone." Well, that's true. God has never, and God will never act with the purpose of tempting anyone to sin, including you. That's the role of our own lusts as we've learned, and of Satan, and of the world system.

But, think about this with me for a moment. While God doesn't lead us into temptation, that is God doesn't compel us into temptation, He's not behind our temptation, He doesn't originate the temptation, God is sovereign. And although He doesn't tempt anyone, He must allow temptation for His own purposes. Because if He didn't permit it, it would never happen. If you really believe, as we all do, in a sovereign God. So, this prayer, lead us not into temptation, could be rephrased like this. God, in your providence, don't allow us to be led by our flesh or by Satan, or by the world system, into any temptation to which we might succumb, any temptation that will cause us to fall. By the way, when we do fall, it's not God's fault, it's our fault. But Jesus is teaching us here to ask God to preserve and protect us from any temptation that would cause us to fall.

God's promised this. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, "[there has] no temptation ... overtaken you but such as is common to man;" [There's great comfort there, isn't there?] "... [But] God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also," [What's the way of escape? That's always the question that people ask. What's the way of escape? Well, the rest of the verse tells us.] "so that you will be able to endure it." The way of escape is not out of the temptation, it's through it without sinning. God has given you the strength, the capacity you need to withstand that temptation and not to fall, and not to sin. Second Peter 2:9, "... the Lord knows how to rescue the godly [out of] ... temptation...." First John 5:18, "We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God (speaking of Christ) keeps him and the evil one does not touch him." What does this look like?

What does it look like to say God, protect me from a situation where I might fall into sin? Well, I love an Old Testament illustration. Turn back with me to Genesis 20. In Genesis 20 we meet a man by the name of Abimelech who interacts with Abraham. Genesis 20:1,

Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." [As you know if you're familiar with your Bible, that was a half-truth, but he intends to say she's not my wife, which wasn't true.] "So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah," [He says, alright, she's a beautiful woman, if she's just your sister and not your wife, hey, I would love to have her as my wife.] Verse 3, But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married." [You're as good as dead if you follow through on this plan. So, Abimelech's response in verse 4.] Now Abimelech had not come near her; [that is not in physical relations] and he said, "Lord, will You slay a nation, even though blameless? Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself [in collusion] "said, 'He is my brother'. In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this." [God, I didn't know! Verse 6] Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her."

Now we don't know how God did that. We don't know, providentially, how God directed that circumstance so that Abimelech's intent couldn't be carried out. But this is a powerful illustration of exactly what Jesus is encouraging us to pray. He is asking us to pray that God would intervene in our lives like that to protect us from ourselves, and from Satan, and from the world.

You want to know how important praying this prayer is? Turn with me to Luke 22. On the night of our Lord's betrayal, He takes His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane. In Luke 22:39, after they come out of the upper room, they proceed as was His custom to the Mount of Olives, the garden there, and the disciples also followed Him. When He arrived at the place, He said to His disciples, now watch this, this is the same thing he urged them to pray months before in this Lord's Prayer. But He says to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." He says, listen, there are going to be some circumstances and events that take place tonight that could lead you away into sin. Pray, pray earnestly that you will not be led away into temptation.

"... He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray," [and you're familiar with this prayer.] Verse 45 "When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and He said to them, Why are you sleeping? Get

up and pray”. Now, it may be that Jesus wasn’t here just saying awake and pray. He may have been saying to them to do what I sometimes have to do. Stand up and pray. If you can’t kneel and stay awake, then get up. Stand on your feet and pray. But pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Of course, we know from the other gospels that he went away a third time and came back and found them sleeping yet again. They failed to do exactly what our Lord had exhorted them to do. And as a result, they didn’t remain faithful to Him. That’s the negative side of the prayer for holiness. Lord, providentially preserve, protect, and keep us from any temptation that will cause us to fall into sin, and don’t let it master and destroy us.

But there’s also a positive side to this petition. We get it in the second half of verse 13. It sort of fills out the idea of our Lord. “But deliver us from evil.” Now the Greek word that’s translated *but* here is much stronger. It’s a much stronger adversative than our English word. We could translate it like this. Rather, on the other hand, deliver us from evil. It is the opposite of being led into temptation. You see, if you pray this prayer from your heart, it means that you not only want to be protected from temptation and evil, but it means that you want God to do whatever it takes to make you holy. To make you like Jesus Christ. To produce in you true holiness. God, on the other hand, deliver us from ourselves and from Satan and from the world, so that we can be like Jesus Christ. That’s what this prayer is.

D. A. Carson in his commentary says, “We could rephrase this petition like this. Lead us not into temptation, but away from it into righteousness. God, providentially direct our lives and our circumstances, not only to see a decreasing pattern of sin in our lives (there’s the negative side) but an increasing pattern of righteousness, of holiness. Don’t just keep me from sin, make me holy. That’s the prayer. It is, in essence, a prayer, at its core, that God will produce in us the fruit of the Spirit, and the deeds that accompany that fruit. I’m reminded of Galatians 5. Turn there with me. This is really what you’re asking, in deliver me from evil.

Make me righteousness. You’re saying God, produce in me the opposite of the deeds of the flesh. Verse 19 of Galatians 5,

Now the deeds of the flesh “[this is the way the flesh acts,] ... “immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing,] and” he wants you to know this isn’t a comprehensive list] “and things like these, of

which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you,” [he says, listen, I’ve told you this before, and I tell you again,] that those who practice such things” [if the practice of your life falls down one of those paths, then you] will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

You can call yourself a Christian. You may have prayed a prayer when you were 5. You may have been a member of a church your whole life. But if your life is characterized by these things, you will not inherit the kingdom of God. Get a grip on reality.

Then, He says, but let me tell you what it’s like to be in Christ. Verse 22, “The fruit which the Spirit produces” that is, the fruit that the Spirit, when He’s present in the life produces is this, “love, and joy, and peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Paul is saying, listen, when the Spirit dominates in the life. When He’s there, when He’s present because you’re in Christ, He produces this fruit that flows out. You know, I’ve known people who’ve claimed to be Christians, and nobody around them has ever seen one of these qualities in their life. You’re kidding yourself. When the Spirit’s there, this is what He produces. Not in perfection perhaps, but in direction.

This is the prayer. “Deliver us from evil.” Make us like Christ. Make us holy. Now, let me just give you some practical application of this sixth petition. What do you do with this?

Well, first of all, ask God to develop in your heart and the hearts of others the attitudes that underlie this petition: a hatred of sin, the desire for holiness, a spirit of dependence. Ask God to help you develop and cultivate those attitudes.

#2. Identify and avoid all those places, people, and circumstances that tempt you to sin. Thomas Watson, in his book on The Lord’s Prayer talks about this. He says, it’s absolutely foolish to pray this prayer, Lord, lead us not into temptation, while you’re opening the door to it. Identify and avoid all those places, people, and circumstances that tempt you to sin.

#3. Pray the positive side of this prayer as we learned it. God, preserve, and protect me and other believers from any temptation that would cause us to fall into sin, and rescue us from that sin when we do choose to disobey.

#4. Pray the positive side of the prayer. Plead with God to providentially direct your life and the lives of those around you, and your circumstances and the circumstances of those around you

toward personal holiness. By the way, this is a prayer not just for us remember. Lead us not into temptation. Pray it for yourself. Pray it for your family. Pray it for our church. Pray it for all the believers that you know. Even pray it for believers you don't know. Pray that God would be glorified in His church.

#5. Listen online, or buy the CDs of the series on sanctification that I'll finish tonight. Because that lays out the very practical steps to pursuing holiness personally. It is hypocritical to pray God, make me holy, if you're not expending the maximum effort that God requires. And we're talking about that even in the evening, so I encourage you to listen to that.

Now, let me back up and briefly take an overview application of this entire 2 1/2-months. What should you do with our study of this magnificent prayer over these many Sundays? Let me give you some very practical steps. The worst thing you could do is leave here this morning and be unchanged by our study of prayer. So, what should you do. Here are some very practical things. And these are some commitments I'm making, and I encourage you to make.

#1. Deliberately schedule times each day to pray. Deliberately schedule times each day to pray because if you don't, you won't. I encourage you to follow a sort of modified plan that John Calvin set forth. He said, we should pray within one hour of waking. That's a great thing. Commit yourself to pray within one hour of getting up in the morning. Perhaps on your bed, perhaps after you get up and get some coffee, and you go stand somewhere, if you're like me some mornings. But commit yourself to praying within one hour of arising. Secondly. Pray when you begin the work day. We're still talking about scheduling times here. Pray when you begin your work day. Whatever that day looks like, whatever it is you do, whenever you begin, choose to set aside time then to pray. It doesn't have to be an hour's time of prayer. Just set aside time to acknowledge your dependence on God, to seek his grace, to seek His help.

Pray before each meal, and make it more than what you learned in kindergarten. That doesn't mean, again, that you have to pray till the food's cold. My wife would be upset with me if I did that. Although, I do that sometimes. But talk to God. Make it a real prayer and not a throw-away prayer. And then before bed. Before you go down to sleep, whether it's on your bed if you're one of those who can stay awake for awhile and really pray. Or if you're like me, and the time your head hits the pillow you're asleep, do it before you get into bed. But before you go to sleep, spend time in prayer. Deliberately schedule times each day to pray.

#2. At least one time each day, follow the pattern of The Lord's Prayer. Flowing through those six categories that we've studied. In other words, at least one time in those prayers, force yourself to follow through the pattern that our Lord has established for us here in The Lord's Prayer. Pray for God's Name to be hallowed in your life and the lives of others. For God's kingdom to be advanced. For His will to be done, Pray for the needs of this life. Pray for the forgiveness of sin. Pray for growth in holiness. Flow through that pattern.

#3. Schedule time at least once a week to pray with other Christians for an hour. Schedule time at least once a week to pray with other Christians for an hour. You remember that we studied that the early church prayed together, constantly. They prayed together. Maybe it's with a roommate, maybe it's with your spouse, maybe it's with your family, maybe it's with co-workers in ministry. It doesn't matter who or where, but let's commit together to do that.

#4. Commit to praying for others. Don't let your prayer be selfish and self-centered. This is about other people the Lord's teaching us to pray, not merely ourselves. Pray for your family. Pray for the people in this church. Let me encourage us all with a habit that I think is a good one. You have a directory of the people in this church, or if you don't some more will soon be available. Let's all commit together to looking at one of those pages each day, one of those picture pages, and praying for the people on that page. Pick up a prayer request list from the back. We're going to try to make it in a format where it'll fit easier in your Bible. You can take it with you. Pray for the people and the needs in this church. Pray for others.

#5. And finally. Be here next Sunday night, or it may be the following Sunday night, I don't know yet, because I've been working on a tool to help us all be more faithful in our daily Bible study and prayer, and I think they're going to be available next Sunday night, but it may be the following Sunday night. We'll see. And I'm going to take the evening service to go through this tool with you. It's a tool to help us implement what we all know we need to do. All of us as believers know we need to spend time in the Word every day. We know we need to be praying every day. But we're often at a loss as to how that should happen. What we should do. And I've put together a tool to help lead us all through that, sort of a reflection of my own pattern of that, and I hope it will be helpful to you, so that's coming up, either next Sunday night or the following one. Our Lord says, in Matthew 6,

“Pray like this, “Our Father Who is 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.

Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Amen. Let’s pray together.

Father, this has been a wonderful journey through this magnificent prayer that our Lord has taught us to pray. Father, I pray that you would make each of us individually committed to prayer. May we as a church be committed to prayer. Lord, don’t let us leave here today unchanged by our study over these last couple of months.

Help us to make these commitments and to follow through on them, that we may honor you, who taught us to pray through your Son in this way.

To the glory of His name, the strength of His church, to the advance of His name and kingdom we pray. Amen.