

*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.*

# the *Lord's* prayer

*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

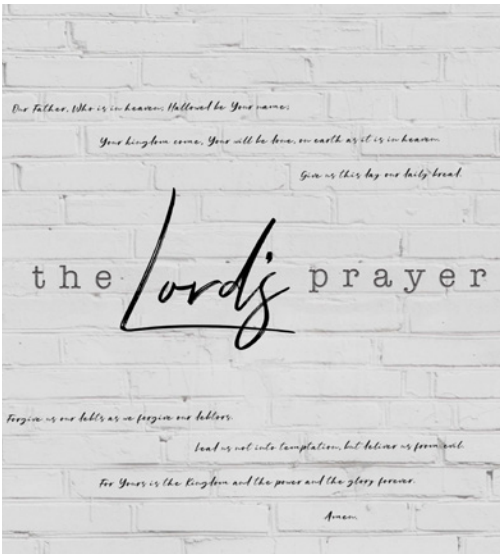
*For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever.*

*Amen.*

# Sermon Growth Guide

**August 7, 2022**

**Protection**



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## **The Lord's Prayer – Protection**

**Matthew 6:9-13**

**Key Verse:** Matthew 6:13

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

**Big Idea:** Jesus invites us to trust God with our protection so that we may live for His glory.

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### **Foundations**

The final three petitions of this prayer offer an interesting structure. We've considered bread for today, followed by forgiveness for the past; now Jesus invites us to acknowledge future temptation that might make prayers for forgiveness necessary. These final three petitions also balance our physical, relational and spiritual needs, and speak to God's comprehensive care for us.

The Greek word for “temptation” can also mean “testing.” This seems a more likely reference in light of the admonition in James 1:13 that “God . . . tempts no one.” Whereas the result of temptation can be demoralizing when we give in to it, the result of testing can reveal a greater strength than was previously known (see Genesis 22).

In the final phrase, Jesus teaches us to pray for deliverance from the evil one. This phrase reminds us of the power and influence of Satan, who is constantly seeking to pull us from the loving embrace of our Lord.

When we pray these closing words to the Lord's Prayer, we're professing three things. First, we're professing our trust in where God leads us. Second, we're professing our willingness to follow. And third, we're professing that God ultimately prevails over the forces of evil and darkness.

### **Understanding God's Word**

Together, read Matthew 6:9–13.

What do these concluding words in verse 13 affirm to us about the one to whom we're praying?

How would you best describe the process of temptation that we experience in our lives? How is the process of testing (such as testing a bridge, a promise, or someone's character) different?

Is it easy or difficult for you to believe in the very real presence and influence of Satan in your life? Why?

### **Applying God's Word**

What gives you confidence that God has your good in mind and will not lead you astray?

In what ways do you seek to actively follow God's leading in your life?

### **Witnessing God's Word**

While we join with the larger Christian community in praying the Lord's Prayer each Sunday in worship, we tend to give less thought during the remainder of the week to what we've professed in it.

As we conclude this sermon series, what is one way you can seek to live out the truths and affirmations of this Sunday prayer during the other six days of the week?

In this final sermon of our ***The Lord's Prayer*** series, we are looking at the theme of ***Protection***.

My parents were both born in England and immigrated to the United States after WWII. But during the War they both endured the vicious aerial attack by the Germans known as the Blitzkrieg, or Blitz for short. It started on September 7, 1940, and finished on May 10, 1941. The initial phase of the Blitz lasted for 56 consecutive nights, as the Germans bombed military sights, towns, and other strategic targets.

One of those strategic targets was St. Paul's Cathedral. Adolph Hitler had determined that one way to crush the spirit and morale of the British people was to destroy their historical structures and monuments. And so, Christopher Wren's glorious St. Paul's Cathedral was targeted.

Knowing this, Prime Minister Winston Churchill rallied the nation and proclaimed that St. Paul's must be saved at all costs. And thus, The St. Paul's Watch stepped into action. They were a group of about 300 people: Cathedral clergy, retired architects, local residents and many others. These courageous volunteers maintained a 24/7 protective watch over St. Paul's.

When the German bombs fell, they ignited small but fierce fires that, if not extinguished, would spread quickly. There were only two direct hits to St. Paul's during the Blitz, but there were countless near misses. One account said that everything around St. Paul's was destroyed. The biggest challenge was a lack of water. If a bomb hit the Cathedral, members of The Watch would have to extinguish the fire with only sand.

Fortunately, the two direct hits on St. Paul's only resulted in relatively minor damage and the cover of the local newspaper exclaimed "St. Paul's Survives!" It provided the Britons a

great morale boost and a powerful resolve to "Keep Calm and Carry On!"

My point in telling this story? Some things are worth protecting at all costs! They may be things of great value or sentiment. They may be things of great historical and cultural significance. Or they may be things of unparalleled spiritual value!

And I think it was for this reason that Jesus concluded His teaching on the Lord's Prayer with the petition for protection, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

These final words of The Lord's Prayer have raised several questions throughout the ages:

For example, Is God a God Who tempts His children to do evil? That would seem vastly hypocritical and manipulative, wouldn't it? I mean, if God has called His people to flee from sin and pursue a life of thanksgiving marked by obedience and holiness, then what kind of God would intentionally set His people up for failure?

On top of that, we have other passages in the Bible that clearly contradicts this line of thinking. For example, James 1:13 says, "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 on one."

So, if God is not a God Who tempts, then what is Jesus teaching in The Lord's Prayer?

The answer lies in the word that Jesus used. While some translations land on the English tempt, a better understanding is that the word means to test. What's the difference? I see it as tempting is aimed at leading a person toward failure, whereas testing is aimed toward leading a person to be stronger and better equipped.

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As an example of tempting, a few years ago Jenny and I took a road trip to Waco, TX to experience the “mecca” of Chip and Joanna Gaines’ Magnolia Farms. While driving home that afternoon, I happened to be following a State Trooper who was exceeding the speed limit. I figured if the Trooper was going 10 miles over the limit it was safe for me to do likewise. The Trooper pulled over, allowed me to pass, turned on his lights and pulled me over for speeding! I wanted to pastorally discuss the concept of entrapment, but I was wise enough to just sit and look humble and apologetic. Fortunately, I got off with a warning. The Trooper was clearly tempting me to speed.

But testing is something different altogether. It’s why athletes train. It’s why military conducts drills. It’s why the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, “Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

So, what is Jesus teaching? He is teaching us to pray for God’s protection that the testing we are destined to endure will not be so severe that it causes us to stumble and do a spiritual face-plant!

I see this as a prayer to increase our awareness and wisdom to know what our boundaries and limits are. Because God created us as unique individuals, our boundaries and limits will most certainly be different. So, the essence of this petition is us praying, “God, you know me better than I know myself. Allow me to be tested to become strong, but not tested so severely that

I betray my calling to be Your child and relapse into my unredeemed self.”

And the good news in this organic, spiritual drama is that God wants us to be victorious! Consider what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:13: “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”

I think this is why Jesus added the final petition of “And deliver us from the evil one.” The word here for deliver is a very strong word that means either rescue or seize. It is a recognition that even though we are this side of the resurrection, where Jesus conquered sin and spiritual death once and for all, there is still the reality of the evil one prowling around our lives, trying to thwart the good work and will of God. Jesus is instructing us to pray for protection that we would be snatched out of the grip of the evil one and saved from spiritual downfall.

Dale Bruner is the now-retired Professor of Religion at Whitworth College in Spokane, WA. He is a brilliant New Testament scholar, having written two of the best commentaries, one on Matthew’s Gospel and the other on John’s. But for all his academic horsepower, Dale has an uncanny way of putting things into earthy simplicity. Here is how Dale paraphrased the final petitions, “Dear Father, please lead us in such a way that we will be able to resist the temptations that both consciously and unconsciously surround us; please constantly swoop down and rescue us from all the wiles of the evil one and all his evil works – we need your help.”

Now as comforting and encouraging as this may be, you may be wondering, “Dave, that sounds great, but bad things still happen to devoted

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followers of Jesus!" And this is most certainly true! How do we reconcile this apparent tension?

Earlier this year, Jenny's cousin, Eric, was taken to the hospital with what appeared to be a staph infection. The initial prognosis was encouraging. Eric was 54 years old. Super healthy. A deeply committed Christian. An athlete. A high school teacher. A basketball coach. An avid surfer. One of the most funny and creative guys on planet Earth. Within 36 hours, Eric tragically died from an incurable sepsis infection.

The family gathered for Eric's memorial service in California, and after the service, our cousin Chris pulled me aside and said, "Dave, we've known each other a long time and you're a 'man of the cloth.' Can you tell me why God would have allowed this to happen?"

My answer to Chris was probably feeble and inadequate, but what I said was that, as tragic as Eric's death was, I think God intended to use it for good. Eric's service was livestreamed, and countless students and faculty tuned in and heard a clear and compelling witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I added a thought about German Pastor and Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer was engaged in a plot to assassinate Hitler but was arrested as part of the Valkyrie Plot. Just days before WWII ended, Bonhoeffer was hung for his crimes against the Fuhrer. Bonhoeffer's influence in death most certainly out shadowed his influence in life! I told Chris that our hope is that God would be glorified and would use Eric's witness and testimony to bring others into His saving grace.

Imbedded in this is the strange part of following Jesus: Sometimes God says no to our prayers and bad things sometimes happen to us. It is, at its

core, something of a mystery to follow Jesus Christ. There are unanswered questions and head-scratching times. But the faithful Christian maintains faith even during the mystery!

On balance, Scripture tells us that God loves us with an unconditional and relentless love; that He wants the absolute best for us; that He wants to bless us; that He wants to use us to expand His kingdom and build His church. And so, we must pray for God's protection!

God is doing something amazing and wonderful in the Middle East. In particular, the underground Church in Iran is the fastest growing church in the world (percentage-wise), and lives are being transformed by the truth and power of Jesus Christ. This is due, in part, to an amazing ministry of equipping underground Christian leaders by PARS Theological Seminary. PARS has a close connection to our ECO denomination, and we have been blessed to be in partnership with PARS and to help them reach more and more people for Christ.

Considering all they do; PARS operates on a shoestring budget with a shoestring staff and conducts their ministry out of a modest facility located in a London suburb. I've visited their operation in London a few years ago and was so touched by their heart and passion for the Iranian people who have suffered terrible persecution if they abandon Islam and embrace Jesus Christ.

Shadi Faheti is the daughter of the PARS Founder and President and is a passionate advocate now working for their ministry. A few years ago, we invited Shadi to come to my former church in Houston and share with our staff and Session. Shadi told this powerful story of how God is moving in Iran:

An Iranian young woman, who had been raised in a devout Muslim home,

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had come to learn about Jesus and had committed her life to Him. As you probably know, this can result in a family disowning a person or even worse. When she told her parents about her conversion, they were outraged and did all they could to convince her otherwise. In an honor/shame culture, it was a huge embarrassment and stain on the family name for her to embrace Jesus as Savior. Her parents went so far as to arrange a marriage with a fine, upstanding and devout Muslim man, but at the meeting, in front of the young man and his family, the woman refused to marry him. In a fit of rage, her father decided to discipline her with a savage beating.

Her father took his belt off and reared back to whip his daughter as she lay cowering on the floor. Suddenly, the father fell to the floor as if having a heart attack and mumbling, "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." The woman pulled herself together, and suddenly worried about her father, rushed to him, asking, "Are you ill? Are you okay?"

Her father replied, "As I went to hit you, I saw a man step in between us, he was glowing in white and wrapped his arms around you to protect you, and he said to me, 'You shall not harm my child!'" The father said the man was undeniably Jesus Christ, and the beating stopped. The father then embraced Jesus as Savior as did the rest of his family.

God is on the move in Iran and is protecting His children and the Church is growing exponentially.

This same Jesus, Who protected a young Iranian woman, is calling on each of us to trust God with our protection so we may live lives to His glory. Amen.

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