

The Lord's Prayer

Deliver Us From Evil

Part 11 - January 18, 2009

Have you ever heard the saying: It's easier to *stay* out of trouble than to *get* out of trouble. That's what we looked at last week: "And lead us not into temptation"

Temptation is like the gently sloping shore on a raging river. As we stick a toe in the water, the Lord says, "Come away." As we wade in up to our ankles, the Lord says, "Come away." The problem is - we can never know where that drop-off is. As we continue up to our knees, the Lord says, "Come away!"

But once we drop into the current, and we're swept away, it's no longer possible to be lead away ... now we have to be rescued.

"But deliver us from evil"

I can be *lead* from temptation, but I must be *delivered* from evil.

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

Some translations say, "Deliver us from the evil *one*". That's because it's a bit vague.

The original simply says: "Deliver us from *the evil*" (which can be translated either way). Either way, it's a prayer for God's intervention whenever, wherever, and however we find ourselves caught up *in*, carried away *with*, or assaulted *by* evil of any sort.

So, what exactly are we asking when we ask God to "deliver us from evil"?



Do you remember a 1960's cartoon called: "Tooter Turtle"?

Mr. Wizard would grant Tooter's wish to become a gunslinger, prospector, bull fighter, etc.. It *always* ended with Tooter getting into trouble and screaming, "Help me Mister Wizard!" Mr. Wizard would say, "Drizzle-drazzle-druzzle-drome; time for zis one to come home!"



Then Tooter would spin in a magical cloud for a couple of seconds, and everything would be okay.

There's a reference to "Tooter Turtle" in "The Matrix" when Neo is in the matrix and calls his operator and says, "Mr. Wizard, get me out of here!"



Q: Is that what this prayer for deliverance is all about?

A: No. There are *two* major flaws with this perspective:

- A. It sees me as passive (as opposed to proactive)
- B. It sees God as reactive (rather than sovereign)



But before we talk about that any further, we need to look at the two types of evil:

- A. [There is] The evil done *to* me.
- B. [And then] The evil done *by* me.

First, let's talk about the evil done *by* me. When we pray, "Deliver me from evil" we acknowledge that we don't have the resources to rescue ourselves from our own evil.

... each one is tempted when, by **his own evil desire**, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. - *James 1:14-15 NIV*

"Help me Mr. Wizard! Get me out of this 'full-grown' mess!" "Drizzle-drazzle-druzzle-drint; time for zis one to repent!" If *I'm* the cause of the mess I'm in, then there is a progression of six steps of deliverance that God wants to bring me through:

1. Recognizing my evil

The Lord must help us to realize the wrongdoing we've done, and convict us to no longer hide or deny our sin.

2. Regretting my evil

This is the remorse that comes from realizing how my sin is hurting me, hurting those around me, and even hurting God. This is not a state of self-loathing that focuses on *my* badness; but an appeal to be healed that focuses on *His* goodness.

3. Returning from my evil



Repentance isn't so much about "clearing my conscience" as it is "reestablishing my relationship" with the Father.

The goal of life isn't to just stop doing bad things. That's a pretty shallow goal. When you're 97 and asked, "How was your life?" are you gonna want to say, "Pretty good, I didn't do a lot of bad things." No. The goal of life is to be filled with His Spirit, to grow in His likeness, and to glorify Him in our relationships and in all that we accomplish.

4. Replacing my evil



Sin is what I do when my heart isn't satisfied with God. And sin is diagnostic. Your particular sin might be an outward expression of an inward feeling of loneliness or emptiness or helplessness or powerlessness, or whatever-essness. Sin is the red flag God uses to say: "We need to work on this!"

Whatever need or desire that I'm trying to fulfill *outside* of His will, I need to relinquish and replace with a plan that's *inside* His will.

5. Receiving grace for my evil

No matter how often, how hard, or how far the fall, He's there waiting for those who admit their sin and repent, so He can cover them with His holiness.

6. Re-devoting myself to righteousness

I don't have the power to obey until I make the *decision* to obey. When I ask God to deliver me from the evil of my own doing, I'm asking for strength, courage, and guidance to walk this path. And He'll give me that ... but He doesn't stop there.

We have to understand that evil is irrational. It makes no sense by itself. It is only definable as good *perverted*.



When God rescues us (through this process), He not only restores what's good, but in the process brings even *greater* good from it. He doesn't just rescue me, He redeems me. He deepens my devotion, my appreciation, and my conviction that He *alone* deserves my love, my trust, and my obedience. *And* He increases my ability to minister to others in similar circumstances.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. - *Romans 8:28 NIV*

- A. It doesn't say we'll *bet* it's true, it says: "we know"
- B. It doesn't say *almost* everything, it says: "in all things"
- C. It doesn't say all things *are* good, it says: "In all things God works for the good"

When Jesus returns, all will see that greater *good* has come to "those who love Him and live according to His purpose" ... and greater *glory* has come to Him, than could have been otherwise. And this will vindicate His wisdom in allowing evil to exist.

Now, this promise to work all things for the good is also in regard to the evil that is done *to* us.

But even when we're praying that God would deliver us from the evil that is done *to us*, it is not a *passive* prayer.

Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him ... - *Psalm 91:14a ESV*

Do you see our part in the process? We must "Hold fast" in love. So, what does that mean? It means: "Don't let go; and don't be overcome by the evil". We live in a fallen world with free will (*that's* a dangerous combination), therefore *limited* evil is allowed *temporary* domain. But Paul instructs us how to act during this time:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. - *Romans 12:21 NIV*



In other words, don't let your enemy's hostility produce hostility in you. Let your love triumph over their wickedness. Don't let someone else's evil make you evil! If I allow someone else's sin to govern my response, if I choose to repay evil for evil, or if I decide to hold a grudge, then I am being thoroughly overcome by evil.

"Father God, *deliver* us from evil." That prayer won't always make the bad go away - what with a fallen world and free will - but it should remind you that He's at work for *your* good according to *His* purpose. God is much more interested in what's happening *in* you than what's happening *to* you.

He doesn't have a reactive role. He's not taken by surprise or caught off guard. In fact, He ordains what happens, all of it, and then infallibly brings the good out of it.

Remember Joseph? His brothers threw him in a pit, and sold him into slavery. His master's wife falsely accused him of sexual harassment. And he was locked up, for many years, in a horrible prison. And yet, when he finally confronts the brothers who were the root cause of all his pain and suffering, Joseph said:

You intended to harm me, but God **intended** it for good ... - *Genesis 50:20 NIV*

Even the cross, which involved the sins of Herod, and Pilate, the Gentiles, and the Jews, was ultimately *God's* master work. What *they* meant for evil, God meant for good!

That's why we have to "hold fast" in love; and trust that He's there and that He cares, whatever the evidence to the contrary.

So, when we pray "Deliver us from evil" we're asking Him to walk us *through* of it; teach us *from* it; deepen our faith *within* it; and cause it to ultimately work to *our* good and *His* glory!