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Presentation Transcript
The Lord's Prayer – Deliver Us From Evil
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March 2, 2017

This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries. Today we're continuing our series on *The Lord's Prayer*. If you've not heard any of the previous presentations in this series, you can find them on our Website, liferesource.org. Our presentation, today, is the seventh one in the series. Its title is *Deliver Us From Evil*.

The last thing Jesus tells us to ask for, in His outline of what to pray about, is to be delivered from evil. Before we actually get into that, I want to start with exactly what He says, so let's look at the scripture in Matthew 6:13. He says:

Matthew 6:13 – *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* So this is a continuation of the thought, "Lead us not into temptation." We might say, "Instead." "Lead us not into temptation, but *instead*, deliver us from evil."

It fits, then, that when we think of the evil Jesus refers to, that we think about our personal sins – all of which arise from sort of temptation. We're told here that it's fitting and necessary to ask God to protect us from ourselves then every day. To omit this part of the prayer is to fall back to the need for a first step toward God. In other words, it's going all the way back to the beginning. It's like becoming *unconverted*. Why do I say that? Well, let's go back to the beatitudes for a moment. In Matthew 5:3, He said:

Matthew 5:3 – *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

That's a pretty big promise, right? The whole ball of wax is offered right there – at the beginning. Let's remember what Louw & Nida said about this term. We read this to you earlier in the series. *It's an idiom – poor in spirit – pertaining to one who is humble with regard to his own capacities, namely this humility is in relationship to God; to be happy –* "Happy are those who are humble before God," you could say. *A literal translation – poor in spirit – might lead to a*

misunderstanding, since poor in spirit is likely to mean either lacking in the Holy Spirit – poor in it – or lacking in ambition or drive. In order to indicate clearly that this poverty of need is related in some way to spiritual realities, one may translate, “Happy are those who recognize their need for God.” So applied here, a need for God would mean that we are helpless before sin’s temptation, except God deliver us from evil deeds.

Failing to ask God to protect us from ourselves is to act like we think we can take care of it ourselves, which is what we thought before we became converted. That is *not* how someone who is poor in spirit acts. Becoming poor in spirit – that is, knowing we are impoverished spiritually and weak before God in every way – is the very first step toward spiritual maturity.

So what does it mean when we take things into our own hands and start acting unilaterally? Well, it means that we are immature spiritually. It’s like we haven’t even come to God yet, because the first step is to become aware of our need for God. Paul talked about this from another perspective that is illuminating for us. It’s in Hebrews 5:12 – he said to the Hebrews:

Hebrews 5:12 – *For though, by this time, you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God – that’s the scriptures. You need milk, not solid food. For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child – a baby – but solid food is for the mature, those who have their powers of discernment trained, by constant practice, to distinguish good from evil.*

Have you ever noticed how babies, once they can get around a bit, start putting everything in their mouths? My grandson drank some laundry detergent recently – wasn’t familiar with it – curious. The way he explores his world is with his mouth, so he tasted it. He doesn’t yet know what’s good and what’s bad to eat. The way he naturally tries stuff out is to put it in his mouth. When he matures past the oral stage of development, he will try stuff out in different ways to learn about it. Paul was telling them that they were spiritually immature, because they had to try things out before they learned something was bad. He learned that soap didn’t taste that great. Earlier Paul told them not to be blown about by every wind of doctrine. Like infants, they went toward everything to learn about it, instead of being able to figure out if it was good or bad, based on guidance from the scripture – not on their own ideas, but based on guidance from the scripture.

I was talking to a young woman recently, who has a very rigid father, who goes only by his church’s interpretation of the Bible. She mentioned that he had no room for historical context. Now, historical context can be important, but I have noticed, if God tells some people how to do something that they don’t want to do, somehow the historical context ends up helping them not do what He says. So, while historical context can help us understand what God is saying if our heart is right, it can also be a slippery slope for the spiritually immature, leading us away from God’s intended meaning and His will.

So what should we do to insure that we're not those people? Well, we have to ask God to deliver us from evil, understanding that we know nothing – can't even tell what is evil is, sometimes – and are helpless in spiritual matters. We all ought to realize that no matter how long we've been in a committed relationship with God, it's easy to fall back to before step one, and think that we can figure things out for ourselves. Consequently, when we ask God to lead us *not* into temptation, we ought – right along with that – to ask Him to deliver us from evil.

Okay, now we're going to consider three sources of sin, so that we can move past needing milk, instead of solid food. The first one is *personal sins*. We need to be protected from ourselves. We need God to deliver us from sinning. We're like those babies I talked about earlier, who put everything in their mouths. My other grandson, when he was crawling around on his belly on the red carpet in their family room, would eat red carpet fuzz. You would think that once would have been enough. But it wasn't. The biological imperative kept telling him to put it in his mouth. He had to learn that it always tasted bad before he stopped. We are like that, it seems. Is there anything we can do to aid God in His efforts to protect us? God wants us to do what we can, right? So, this isn't all on Him. We have to do some of it, too. I'm reminded of something Paul said – Romans 13:14.

Romans 13:14 – *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.*

This is such an important point that I'm going to have to expand on it in another presentation sometime soon. An example would be a client of mine, who told me she and her family were going to go visit her parents. And her father – to hear her perceptions of him – has a personality issue. He needles her on their different opinions on religion and politics until she flies into a rage and calls him bad names. Knowing this, she is staying in a motel this time, so she can leave if she feels like she's going to blow. "By now," she said, "I should know what he is, and I should be able to let it go by. But I don't seem to be able to do that, so I'm going to take a break if it gets too bad." You see, she has measured herself against God's word, and sees that she's weak, so she is making no provision for the flesh – that is, the *sarx* – that part of her that is the devil's way of thinking. Amazing! When she admits weakness, and takes it into account, she becomes stronger spiritually – just like Paul said of himself, "In weakness, I am made strong." See, understanding that we're weak is the first step to becoming strong.

Another more direct example: I have a client who is a porn addict. He accesses it through his phone, having gotten rid of his computer already. He's trying to stop. So he purchased a high-end filtering app, and asked his addiction group sponsor to password it for him. So now he can't access pornography on his phone either – but he still gets to use his phone for other things. The idea is to put his porn-oriented dopamine receptors to sleep through lack of use.

Okay, we've talked a lot about dealing with the issue of dealing with our own sins. Let's move on to the evil deeds of others. Let's go to 2 Timothy 4:16. Here Paul says to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4:16 – *At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me – when other people didn't, God stood by him – so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.* Wow! He was in court. Nobody was there to defend him. And the penalty was to go meet the lions. *The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed of others – that's what he's talking about – and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.* It's sounds like he's read Jesus' prayer outline, too, doesn't it?

So we see that the radical Muslim terrorists are out to kill Christians and we hear horrible stories about that. We know Paul faced wild beasts at Ephesus. We know Jesus was crucified by the Romans at the behest of Jewish religious hierarchy. What's in store for us? I think Paul, who is qualified, explains to us that God's goal is not, in every case, to protect us from all suffering, but to rescue us from evil by bringing us safely into his heavenly kingdom. That's what he's after. And, if that isn't enough for us, we probably need to find another planet to live on, because suffering is a part of human life – Christian or not. It comes with the territory. Still, there are many places in the Bible where we see God delivering people from physical catastrophe and great evil. I mean, think about the Israelites at the Red Sea. So, it's perfectly acceptable to God, that when we ask Him to deliver us from evil, we can have in mind the evil of others, as well as our own evil deeds.

There's also another way of thinking how evil affects us. We can read about that in Galatians 6:1.

Galatians 6:1 – *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*

Sins of others tend to rub off on us, because we're weak. Also, sin of others tends to incite us to sin. What do I mean by that?

Here's an example: We had a horrific thing happen in our community – I mentioned it earlier in this series. A little girl was murdered, in a most horrific way, by her own mother. It was so bad that even those who helped the first responders were traumatized by some of the things they heard. People in the community were so incensed that they wanted to do the perpetrators what they had done to this little girl. The desire for revenge, retaliation, eye-for-an-eye, and vigilante action all came to the minds of many people who heard about what happened. God's position is that He's going to take care of them. We don't have to do anything. Sometimes He uses the law, and if we're a part of the law, then we may be involved in it. But He says He gives us overseers in the law – in the government – for our good. Sometimes He uses other evil people – “birds of a feather flock together,” so quite often those who do evil deeds succumb to the evil deeds of others. Sometimes He lets them suffer the natural consequences of their actions. Sometimes He waits until the third resurrection. He has lots of options, but He *always* executes justice. It's a

bedrock principle of God. We're to protect the innocent, if we have a chance. After that, we're to stand aside and let Him work, and to remain free of murderous or hateful feelings. It's not our job. He's going to do it.

Okay, so there's a third way that I want to talk about now – where we need to be delivered from evil.

I heard Newt Gingrich say, on Fox News, recently that the mainstream press has moved away from reporting the news to propagandizing the public. All you have to do is listen to the slant they put on everything that they are against to see the truth of his statement. Of course, if you believe the same way they believe, you would miss it. It would sound like truth to you. On the other side of the coin, I heard Barak Obama, in a speech, say that evil exists in the world. And the example he gave was Nazi Germany. He said, “Non violent protest would not have worked in the face of that kind of evil.” Now, if you adhere to the Fox News slant on the world, you might not believe Obama could even understand that, since he is portrayed as such a weak person. And your mind would go scrambling for another explanation, because it doesn't fit with your idea of what Obama is like, based on Fox News commentary. So, both sides are the same, really – denying truth they don't want to face when confronted with it.

Let's go back to the first side of this issue. Those who hold strong leftist views, like most of the liberals in our country today, don't like to think about the 40,000,000 Russians Joseph Stalin killed in his own country. They would not like to think about the possible failure of non-violent protest in Communist Russia, or Communist China, or Communist North Korea, or Communist Cambodia, or almost the entire Middle East. Not able to excuse it, they simply don't talk it. The point here is, not that the conservatives are correct, or that liberals are correct, or that conservatives are wrong, or liberals are wrong, but that there is a withering spirit of division and deception at work among us in our nation. Both sides believe they're right and ignore all evidence to the contrary. And that ignoring keeps everybody blinded. God is not a liberal and He is not a conservative. He's not left. He's not right. He's God! If we want to come out of deception, we need to get on His side. Would you conservatives like an example?

Jesus said, “The poor” – no matter how hard you try, is implied – “you will always have with you.” What are you going to do about that? Tell them to have a nice day and leave them to starve in the streets? Well, we're specifically warned against that. Or, are you going to help them, as a good Christian? Well, how would you do that? Do they live in your neighborhood? Probably not. So where would you meet them to help them? What part of your time and income resources will you give to meet your personal duty to the poor?

Liberals, God's way of taking care of the poor in ancient Israel was to legislate support for the poor from those who made income, leaving the king's government completely out of the process. Farmers were not to pick their fields and trees clean of crops. They were to leave the edges and the corners of the fields unharvested, so that those who were poor could come and glean for

themselves. They left the government – beyond God’s law – completely out of the process, while there was a way for the poor to have food to eat without becoming a voting block to be manipulated, in our day, by greedy Senate and House members. That way, politicians could not make large portions of the nation dependent on government for support, thus insuring that they had power, through control of their income, and then using the poor as pawns for their political gains. I can tell you, from reading the Bible, it’s black and white. God *hates* what’s going on in our nation with the poor – by both sides – because the poor are being exploited – kept dependent, instead of cared for and prepared to take a better place in society.

Yet, no one seems to see what’s going on! When a nation suffers division on our level, there’s only one cause for it. Jesus said we should pray that He would deliver us from evil. Some translations render that *the evil one*. Yes, the devil does also influence us individually – and he’s good at it – but his greater focus is much wider. We can see the fruits of his work at work in our nation now. It’s been building for a long time, and it may have to go deeper yet, but nothing good is going to come of it.

So, wrapping up. When Jesus tells us to ask God to deliver us from evil, there’s a lot to think about – a lot of ways evil can come to us – a lot of vulnerability – and only one way to survive it. And that’s God’s intervention.

Next time, we’ll conclude this series with Jesus’ way of closing our prayers. We’ll call it, *Yours Is the Kingdom*.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families, and the Church of God.