

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

The Lord's Prayer

by Rev. Gerald Procee

Lecture #8

*Lead Us Not into Temptation,
But Deliver Us from Evil*



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

The Lord's Prayer

14 Lectures

by Rev. Gerald Procee

1. Introduction: Biblical Foundation and Course Outline
2. Our Father Which Art in Heaven
3. Hallowed Be Thy Name
4. Thy Kingdom Come
5. Thy Will Be Done on Earth as it is in Heaven
6. Give us This Day Our Daily Bread
7. Forgive Us Our Debts, as We Forgive Our Debtors
8. Lead Us Not into Temptation, but Deliver Us from Evil
9. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory
10. Amen
11. Practical Issues Regarding Prayer
12. Prayer Life of Pastors
13. Difficulties in Prayer
14. Blessings of Prayer

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Lecture #8

Lead Us Not into Temptation, but Deliver Us from Evil

Welcome to this lecture number eight in the series on the Beauty of Prayer. Today we hope to consider the petition the Lord Jesus teaches us when the Lord Jesus tells us, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Last time, we considered the petition: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Now, if it is a reality in your life that you know of forgiveness of sins, and the peace you have experienced that God removed all the guilt from your life and washed you from your sins, then it cannot be otherwise, but you long to live according to His will. Then the love of God enters your heart. The Lord has been so good to me. Then you wish to live for Him, and you hate all kinds of sin, and you want to flee from sin, and you want to cut out sin from your life.

At the same time, you will quickly realize that you just cannot cut out sin from your life because sin is always close by. Scripture says sin lies at the door (Genesis 4:7). You can easily stumble, and then you fall again into sin. If it is spiritually well with you, you will hate that you still do sin. It's a struggle, isn't it? It's an ongoing battle in life. It needs to be fought every day again. It's a struggle against all kinds of sin, not just against one or two forms of sin that can be predominant, certain sins that you are struggling with.

But it's not just a battle against one or two sins. It's a battle against all manner of sin. It's a mark of a heart that has been renewed by God's Spirit, when you fight against all manner of sin. But if you do not have a renewed heart, then you do not know this battle. You see, it's like with fish. Dead fish float along with the current, while living fish swim up against the current. When the Lord has renewed your life, you will resist sin. He teaches you to do that. Then often you will go against what other people are doing. You will not join in with their sins, for you have been taught by God to flow up against the current of sin and temptation. That's a heavy battle. How can a person continue in that battle? By remembering this prayer, and by saying it often in your life: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

What is temptation? Temptation is an attempt to lead someone to stumble into a snare, or to let someone fall into a pit. By cruelty and deceit, you let someone fall into sin. That's now exactly something the devil wants to do. He does it himself. He can also cause other people to lead you into temptation, and to let you fall into sin. He can also use your own heart, that your heart would tempt you, and your sinful desires would tempt you to do something sinful. You know, when sin breaks through in our life, and when it comes to completion, then misery and death, even eternal

death can be the result.

When we look at this matter of temptation, we must distinguish between temptations and trials. You see, the devil tempts to sin, but God never tempts to sin. God can give trials in one's life. James shows us this clearly in chapter 1:13–15: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

You see, the devil will lead to sin, but God will never lead a person to sin. The Lord can purge and purify His people by means of chastisements and by leading them into certain trials and struggles. In this way, they are exercised to godliness, just like a soldier is also trained and exercised by hardships and trials. And so, the Lord can also lead His people into certain struggles and trials because gold must be purified, because it is gold. So, the life of faith must be purified, because it is faith.

We see this happening in the lives of various children of God in Scripture. Think of the trial that Abraham went through in Genesis 22:2, where the Lord told him: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." What a trial. That's impossible. How can a man slay or sacrifice his own son? This was a test that God used to increase the faith of Abraham. Now Abraham believed and trusted God so fully that he was willing to do this. So, he took Isaac and wood and fire, and they went to the mountain. How the devil must have assaulted him with temptations to forsake God and to turn away from God's calling. The devil must have told him, "You have money. Buy land and live here with the Canaanites, and spare your son, and forget about God and all His promises of salvation. How can God ask you to do a thing like this?" But Abraham resisted these temptations, and he persevered in this trial. He believed God, so Abraham's faith was strengthened. The Lord led him through.

You see, the Lord puts those whom He loves through certain trials in life. He does it for their wellbeing, because all things must work together for those who love God. And so, the Lord chastises whom He loves, and through these chastisements, their faith is strengthened. Think of Hebrews 12:6–7: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" The Lord can allow the devil to tempt His people. The aim of the devil is to lead to destruction. The aim of God is to strengthen the life of faith. Then you are led to realize more and more your weakness and how dependent you are upon God. Likewise, you see more the need of His cleansing blood in your life. So, you see the value of Christ more and more.

We see more examples of trials of God in Scripture, for instance, Job. The devil received permission to tempt Job. God had allowed the devil to afflict Job but not to take his life. Finally, when Job had lost his health, he was in great turmoil, but still, he trusted in God. He was led to humble himself before God, and to acknowledge that God is still just and righteous in all His ways and works, and we hear then Job confessing his own weakness and inability before the Lord. He confesses his sinfulness in Job 42:5–6: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Through these great trials, Job's faith was strengthened. In the end, it was far better with Job than before.

Another clear example is in the Lord Jesus Himself, Who fasted for 40 days and nights in the wilderness and was tempted by the devil. Finally, the devil came with great, severe temptations, tempting the Lord Jesus to give up His work as Savior. In Matthew 4:1, "Then was Jesus led up

of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” But now the Lord Jesus also had the opportunity to display His power and to tell the devil of his pending defeat.

So, temptations and trials are a reality, and we must understand this petition [that] the Lord Jesus teaches us, “Lead us not into temptation.” It means on the one hand that the Lord would deliver us from falling into temptation, that the Lord would keep temptations from us. And on the other hand, it is that when these temptations would come by God’s guidance, that I would be upheld and sustained, that the Lord would support me, that I would resist and fight against sin, and do that my life long, because the reality is that under these attacks of the prince of darkness, I am weak, and I need His strength. So, temptations are a great reality in the lives of God’s children.

We see that more often in Scripture: temptations. Think of Lot. He went to live in the city of Sodom, although he knew the people there were wicked people, but the land there was so fertile. The land was green and lush. It was a temptation for him. David, walking on the roof of his house, and he watched Bathsheba bathing herself. Solomon was weakened by his wives to commit idolatry. We see Peter sitting among the servants of the high priest’s court. We see Abraham, who lied because he was afraid that they would kill him, so he said [of] his wife, “She is just my sister.” We even see Jeremiah in all his sufferings and grief, and he cursed the day of his birth. These are all examples of God’s children falling and stumbling into temptations, and these were all people who belonged to God, who had been purchased by the Lord. They had been redeemed by God’s grace. They had tasted the forgiving grace of Christ, and they knew the love of God in their hearts, but they also fell in certain temptations, because there are times when vicious battles can erupt in the soul and in the mind of God’s children. Therefore, we need to know this prayer: “Lead us not into temptation.”

It’s necessary that we resist these temptations, that we fight the good fight of faith. We need God’s strength. We need the Lord to protect us, because don’t think that you have the power to overcome certain sins, and when you are no longer tempted by certain sins, don’t think that you have overcome that sin. It’s God Who is keeping you from these temptations, that you don’t think about it anymore. That’s not because of you. It’s God’s grace.

And so, we need to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” because the reality is that the life of a Christian is under assault. There are three enemies fighting against God’s children. What are these enemies? They are the devil, the world, and our own wicked heart. The devil is the ruler of this world, and he rallies the world to assault God’s children. Man still has a sinful heart, inclined to all wickedness, even after you have received grace. Think of David, what he did in his life. So, all these wicked inclinations are not annulled, totally removed by conversion. It’s true, in conversion the power of sin has received a mortal blow, but the inclinations are still there, and at times they can erupt, and the aim is to cause God’s children to fall. These three enemies are mortal enemies. They seek our death, our destruction, our doom. The devil, the world, and your own flesh seek your destruction. The devil will never cease to assault God’s children because he is their mortal enemy, and together with the temptations of the world and the inclinations of our own heart, the devil attacks God’s children.

You know, it’s so sad, but by nature we are friends with the devil, the world, and our own carnal heart. We soon listen to what they tell us. These three mortal enemies must become our enemy, and no longer our friends, and that will only happen when God intervenes, when God gives us a taste for spiritual matters, when He renews our heart. The Lord announced that already in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” This enmity is laid in the hearts of all those whom

God draws out of the realm of darkness to the kingdom of His light. He draws them by the power of His love. He sheds light in their souls, teaches them to live by love. Their eyes are open. They see the reality of their lives, that they are by nature following the inclinations of the evil one. They feel the burden of that guilt. They see goodness in the service of God, and now they wish to follow Him all the days of their life. And then, enmity is laid in their heart against this three-fold enemy: the devil, the world, and our own wicked heart.

These enemies will continually assault you. Every age can have its own specific temptations or trials, every age, every stage in life. Young people may have other temptations than older people, but these enemies will continue to assault. Think, for instance, of Luke 4:13: “And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from the Lord Jesus for a season.” You see? Only for a time. But he’ll be back. He will come again. So, if we look at these three enemies, we consider the devil. Who is he actually, the devil? Well, he was once a high-placed angel, full of goodness. That’s how God had created him, but he fell into sin. How is that possible? He fell into sin, Scripture tells us, because of pride. He became very proud, and then he revolted against God. He wanted to be as God. We find this in 1 Timothy 3:6, where Paul tells Timothy not to have one who is new to the faith as an elder because then he can quickly elevate himself, and that he thinks too much of himself, that he falls into pride. That’s why Paul says “not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” The devil became proud, and he fell into this condemnation.

We also read of other devils, the demons who are also first angels in heaven. Jude 1:6 tells us: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” So, we know also that there was war in heaven, Revelation 12:7–9: “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found anymore in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

That’s where the devil comes from. This does not answer all our questions. There are certain matters here we still do not understand, and we do not need to understand that. We may know simply that God is good, and God is not the author of evil, and that He hates sin, and to combat sin He was willing to sacrifice His own Son to save sinners. And so, we do not understand still how all this was possible, but we know that God gave the angels a free will, and by virtue of that free will, they could revolt against God. That’s what some of them did. Now they hate God, and they make war against God’s children.

We read in Revelation 12:17: “And the dragon was wroth” (angry) “with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed” (That’s the church). Then they “keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” The name Satan means “adversary.” He is always against God and His will. The devil seeks to draw people away from God, and then he lies to them and says, “You will have a wonderful time if you rebel against God,” but they fall into misery and suffering.

Many think that speaking about demons belongs to heathen people, to pagans who believe in evil spirits, and that this belief no longer belongs to our enlightened age, but that’s exactly what the devil loves to see. You see, he is a terrible reality, and he loves it when people do not even believe he exists. But you see it in the Bible clearly revealed, and you can see it all around. Why are so many people hating Christians? Why do they hate the church? They [that is, Christians] only

love God and love their neighbor. Why is there so much enmity, so much violence against God's people, and all the deceit and the error that he is pouring out upon the church that will spoil the life of faith, and that he tries to stop the spreading of the Bible, and that he uses all kinds of lusts and temptations to destroy spiritual life? He attacks God's people personally. He tries to cast doubt upon God's Word, and when that doesn't work, then he tries to portray God's service as dull, and dry, and lifeless, or he tries to sow discord between brethren.

So, he whispers to them, "The Lord has forsaken you, and the Lord has forgotten you." Or he comes with all kinds of warped ideas about sin. He can point out the sins you have done, and highlight them. He's trying to lead you to despair, or on the other hand, he emphasizes only God's grace, and he pushes you into presumption, while there's no real sorrow for sin and no repentance. And so, the devil wants to keep you away from God. He wants to cut off the communion with God.

Is God's Word true? Just like he said to Eve. Has God spoken? That's how he already operates, and he is the murderer from the beginning. That's why we must pray, "deliver us from the devil, from evil." But he's only one enemy. There's also the other enemy: the world, the second enemy. The world is not the created world, but the world in its sin and rebellion and hatred against God, the world with all its pride of life, and with the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh. That all goes against God, just like 1 John 2:15–16 tells us: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." And so, Paul writes in Romans 12:2: "Be not conformed to this world," this world that's the rebellion against God.

You know, if we live for this world, for materialism, we are worldly. If we live for wealth, we are worldly. If we have no care or love for our fellow church members and we look down upon them, then we have a worldly mentality, although we are in church. The world is a great danger, and we need the love of Christ in our heart, that He would change us after His image. We need to be delivered from the temptations of the world.

But then there's still the other enemy, the third enemy, our own flesh, our own self that so easily resists God, that's an enemy we harbor in our own hearts, the enemy within our own gates. This enemy often seeks to align itself with the world and with the devil. That's displayed by our sinful desires, by covetousness, by harshness of heart, by our pride. This is the working of the old man within a Christian, that opposes God. That old man is so close to us that before we know it, we are stumbling and falling. We need to see these three enemies: the devil, the world, and our flesh. We can even be blind to them. We must realize they are there, and then pray that God would deliver us from all this evil.

How can we resist these enemies? It's a battle. It's a spiritual battle, and therefore, we need spiritual weapons. You can't fight against these enemies with violence or with carnal weapons. You need spiritual weapons that the Holy Spirit teaches. So, the Holy Spirit teaches people to resist the devil, to deny themselves, and to flee from temptations. The strength therein is received by prayer and by the study of God's Word. When we pray to be delivered out of temptation, we're actually praying, "Father, deliver me from places where I may be tempted to sin against Thee and grieve Thy Spirit." It's a prayer that God would not withdraw His restraining care from us. It's a prayer that God would open your eyes to recognize the deceit and filth of this world, and it's by prayer that you receive strength.

Think of what Paul says in Ephesians 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." The

Lord gives strength to resist evil. He sheds light upon our paths, that we recognize the tricks of the devil. You know, without the Lord we cannot stand one moment. Peter falls when a maid asks him something. David fell for a woman. Demas fell because of love for the world. Oh, how we need God's grace, the power of God's Spirit to fight against these enemies. We need to be a Christian warrior, a soldier, that we may stand in the evil day. That's what Paul says in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." That's the issue. The Lord clothes His people with spiritual armor. He gives them the helmet of salvation, the girdle of truth, and the shield of faith (Ephesians 6:13–17). He makes them very willing. He shows them the power of God's Word that they can use as a sword in this battle. And when they stumble, then still the Lord is willing to forgive them, and that they, eventually, by resisting the devil, will see that he will flee from you (James 4:7). It's a battle that takes place throughout our life.

But flee to the Lord with all your weakness, also with your failings. The Lord will sustain you, and He will lead you on. He knows what it is to be tempted. The disciples tempted Him. The multitude tempted Him. The Pharisees even tempted Him. And He overcame all these temptations. Now you are invited to come to this Savior, Who Himself resisted every temptation. He is willing to be your God, your Savior, and therefore we pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."