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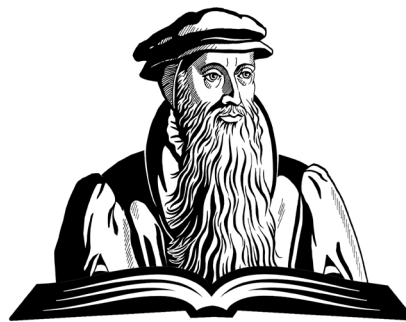
Shorter
CATECHISM

VIDEO LECTURE SERIES

by Rev. Jonathan Mattull

Lecture #59

**The Lord's Prayer:
The Sixth Petition**
Catechism Question 106



The John Knox Institute
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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Rev. Jonathan Mattull is minister of the gospel at Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, in St. Louis, Missouri, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Presbytery of the United States of America.

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28. Blessings of Salvation at Death—*Question 37*
29. Blessings of Salvation at the Resurrection—*Question 38*
30. The Duty Required of Man—*Questions 39–42*
31. The Ten Commandments: A Preface of Grace—*Questions 43 & 44*
32. The Ten Commandments: Love for God—*Questions 45–8*
33. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Worship—*Question 49–52*
34. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Name—*Questions 53–56*
35. The Ten Commandments: A Day for Holy Love—*Questions 57–59*
36. The Ten Commandments: Love for God's Day—*Questions 60–62*
37. The Ten Commandments: Love within Our Relationships—*Questions 63–66*
38. The Ten Commandments: Love for Life—*Questions 67–69*
39. The Ten Commandments: Love for Purity—*Questions 70–72*
40. The Ten Commandments: Love for the Lord's Allotment—*QQ 73–75*

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41. The Ten Commandments - Love for the Truth—*Questions 76 thru 78*
42. The Ten Commandments - Love from Within—*Questions 79 thru 81*
43. Understanding Our Sin—*Questions 82 thru 84*
44. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Saving Faith—*Questions 85 and 86*
45. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Repentance unto Life—*Question 87*
46. Escaping God’s Wrath and Curse: Means of Grace—*Question 88*
47. Means of Grace: The Word of God—*Questions 89 and 90*
48. Means of Grace: The Sacraments—*Questions 91 thru 93*
49. Means of Grace: Christian Baptism—*Questions 94 and 95*
50. Means of Grace: The Lord’s Supper—*Question 96*
51. Means of Grace: Receiving the Lord’s Supper—*Question 97*
52. Means of Grace: Prayer—*Questions 98 and 99*
53. The Lord’s Prayer: The Preface—*Question 100*
54. The Lord’s Prayer: The First Petition—*Question 101*
55. The Lord’s Prayer: The Second Petition—*Question 102*
56. The Lord’s Prayer: The Third Petition—*Question 103*
57. The Lord’s Prayer: The Fourth Petition—*Question 104*
58. The Lord’s Prayer: The Fifth Petition—*Question 105*
- 59. The Lord’s Prayer: The Sixth Petition—*Question 106***
60. The Lord’s Prayer: The Conclusion—*Question 107*

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Lecture #59

The Lord's Prayer: The Sixth Petition

Question 106: *What do we pray for in the sixth petition?*

Answer: *In the sixth petition (which is, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil") we pray, That God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.*

We come to the final petition in the Lord's Prayer. Now, there's still another part of the prayer that we'll look at in the next lesson, but in this lesson, we consider the last petition. And as we do, we notice a great balance and beauty to this model and directory that Christ has given us to help us in our praying. We've seen, as you'll remember, the foundation for our reverent and confident approach to God in prayer, that we're taught to call upon him as our Father which art in heaven. We've seen the guidance that begins all, that we would seek his glory. And we've also seen how the Lord teaches us to approach him for our daily needs, as well as what to do with our awakened consciences regarding our sin. Yet there's still another aspect of our lives that needs his help, and it's the daily living in spiritual things.

Today's lesson looks at the sixth petition. And as we do, we're taught what to do with the ongoing life we live in this world, particularly with the many evils that surround us, how it is that we find the ability to overcome temptation and sin. And so, the sixth petition, with the help of Question #106 of the *Shorter Catechism*: "What do we pray for in the sixth petition?"—"In the sixth petition (which is, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*) we pray, That God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted." This comes from Matthew 6, verse 13, and you'll find it as well in Luke 11, verse 4.

We should clarify something right away. There are two ways that we find the Bible uses the word translated as "tempt," or "tempted," or "temptation." One is in the sense of being tested, and so, God orders our lives that we're faced at times with circumstances that test and examine us, and not only allow us to say what we think and believe, but actually it displays what we think and believe. We see this in an example from Abraham's life, when he was told to offer up Isaac, his son of promise. And so, we read in Genesis 22, verse 1, "God did tempt Abraham." Now, this doesn't mean that God was leading Abraham to desire sinful things. It means that God was testing Abraham. He was presenting him with circumstances that would prove through action whether Abraham trusted God or not. So as you read the whole of that chapter, you'll be amazed at Abraham's faith, which was displayed by his action. And be sure as well to read Hebrews 11, verses 17 through 19, and you'll see how it is that faith was shown by Abraham's obedience.

But there's another way of speaking about temptation. So the first is how God tests us. But there is this other idea of our hearts being drawn to something that is sinful. Perhaps this is what we often think of when we hear the word "temptation"—the attraction of our souls; the desires of our souls after something that's forbidden. Well, it's important with that to remember what James tells us in chapter 1, verses 12 to 15. He writes, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. 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 how James uses the word "tempted" as translated in our Bibles in that second way. God is not tempted, that is, he's not attracted after sin. Neither is he the one that lures men and draws their hearts after sin. But rather, our own hearts, as Christ reminds us, that sin comes from our own hearts. Our hearts are allured after sin, as James has said.

This helps us understand a few things from the beginning. When we ask God, "Lead us not into temptation," we aren't acting as if God is the one who would cause our hearts to be drawn away into sin. Rather, acknowledging that he may order our lives with various things that will try us and test us, we're asking that he would keep us from those particular attacks of Satan and the appeals of the world that would be the circumstances of our hearts sinning against him. So what we'll see, what we are doing is acknowledging our need for God to intervene and help us.

So then, three things for our lesson: first, *Our Vulnerable Weakness*; second, *Our Needed Guidance*; and third, *Our Required Deliverance*.

So first, *Our Vulnerable Weakness*. Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 10: verse 12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Paul is warning us against pride. It's important to realize that Paul is writing to Christians. Christians may be tempted unto pride. So as soon as we think that we're able to resist sin and temptation on our own, or that we have arrived at such a place in our spiritual growth that now we are above the strength of temptation, Paul is saying we're on the verge of falling. We see this in Peter's life on the night that Jesus was betrayed. In Matthew 26, Jesus warned the disciples about what was going to happen. And he said to his disciples, "All ye shall be offended because of me this night," by which he meant that all of you are going to stumble because of me this night. What you will see me face will cause you to stumble. He was warning them. He told them that they were going to sin. Notice how Peter responded, Matthew 26, verse 33, "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Instead of casting himself before the Lord and realizing that he had the ability to sin, even as Christ had forewarned, and instead of asking God for grace, and help, and mercy, he stood up confident in himself that he would not stumble, and he would not fall.

We do not need to be harsh against Peter because we share in his self confidence, and in his stumbling as well. Doubtless, he was trying to express, though misguided, his love to Christ and his desire to follow him. However, Peter failed to have considered that left to himself, he was unable to resist temptation. And this is that important lesson for us. We have a vulnerable weakness that, if it's exposed, we have no defense. When we rely upon ourselves, our own wisdom, our own power, our own ability, we are sure to fail. We may be convinced that we love Christ, indeed, we may love Christ, but this is a subtle error that enters in. While we may love Christ, self confidence may creep in and falsely assure us that by our own strength, we will be able to withstand temptation and overthrow it. We must learn that we do not have power in ourselves, by ourselves, to resist even the smallest temptation. We see this in the continuance of Peter's life.

Later on, in Matthew 26, we find Peter facing temptation, and it doesn't come by means of an armed guard; it doesn't come by means of the fear of torment. Rather, it comes in the form of a simple word from a servant girl. Christ is being mocked and beaten, and Peter is outside. Notice what happens in Matthew 26, verse 69: "Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee." This damsel, or servant girl, identified Peter as one who was with Jesus. Surely, this isn't an overwhelming truth. Peter had said, "Though all men shall be offended and fall and stumble, and yet not I." But notice Peter's response in verse 70, "But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest." And so it happens two more times, as Christ foretold. The third is the strongest of all denials—verse 74, "Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew." Peter had stumbled. He thought that he stood, and he relied on himself, only in himself to give in to temptation. What a strong word it is, that he began to curse and to swear. It's not just that he was using what we might call foul language. It's that he was, in effect, saying, "May God condemn me if I know that man. I swear in God's name that I do not know that man." Oh, what a wicked thing! What a lesson it is to remember that we have a vulnerable weakness that, once exposed, even to a servant girl, would lead us into denying Christ.

This then leads us to our second point, *Our Needed Guidance*. This shows us that we need God's gracious guidance to keep us away from temptation, and this is because we realize how weak we are. We need God to keep us from those things that would expose us to that weakness of ourselves. And so we pray, as the *Catechism* explains, that God would "keep us from being tempted to sin." And so, as it were, one way of avoiding the sin itself, is by avoiding the temptation to sin, the circumstances of it. And so we pray, "I don't want to get close to the line, oh Lord. I want you to rather lead me the opposite way."

There's an interesting passage in Exodus 13 that helps us see this. It tells about the "way" that God led Israel through the wilderness after leaving Egypt. And so they were to head to the promised land—the land of Canaan—and yet, instead of going the shorter direction, they actually went the longer way. And you can get a map out and see this way that they went. This much shorter way, you would think would be the way that God would lead them, because it was quicker, and they'd be more quickly into the promised land. But God did not lead them that way, and we're told why. Notice Exodus 13, verses 17 and 18: "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." So the reason that God led them the longer way was to keep them from temptations. He knew the way of the Philistines was shorter, but he also knew the shorter way would face the Israelites with overwhelming circumstances, and that their desires for comfort would be so strong that they would turn back to Egypt.

Well, this is an amazing insight for us. We often think of the difficulties that we face, and say, "Why is God leading us through these difficulties?" Well, remember the difficulties Israel faced in the wilderness, and yet God knew that there were even more challenging difficulties they would have faced if he would have led them the shorter way. In other words, he was guiding them mercifully. And this should let us see how good God is. It should also help us see, when we face challenges and afflictions in this life, that maybe God is actually leading us in a less challenging way, and we should learn to trust him because he is good.

And as we think of the petition, "Lead us not into temptation," it helps us see this great

encouragement that God is one who is pleased to lead us in ways that keep us from it. It doesn't mean he will always do so, because he has good and holy purposes when he does bring to pass those ordered circumstances that present us with testing and trial. But we ask him, nonetheless, knowing our weakness, that, being weak in ourselves, he would remember our frame that we are weak, and that in mercy he would lead us not into those circumstances, but away from those circumstances.

As a related point, if we're asking God not to lead us into temptation, surely we should be diligent to avoid those circumstances ourselves. Many times, consciously, we know the things that would lead us into temptation, and we know the things that would lead us away from them. And so, we should be diligent to use our own minds, and guided by God's Word, to avoid those things where we know we would be faced with temptations. But even when we do that, we're acknowledging that things out of our control may come, and so we ask him to guide us in mercy.

This leads us, third, to our last point, *Our Required Deliverance*. We realize that there are indeed occasions when God will order our lives, such that we are faced with circumstances that test and try us. And it's not because God is luring us into sin, or he's tugging upon our hearts to make us want to sin. Rather, he's testing and examining us, as we saw with Abraham. He has good and holy purposes for this. And yet we also realize that, apart from his grace, we'll give in to those circumstances and sin against him. So we cry out, "Deliver us from evil." This expression "evil" can refer to the "evil one," Satan, but it also can refer to the wicked things of this world. All of which would mean this: that those things that would come against us, and, as it were, in our own sins remaining, attract us unto sin, we pray, when that comes, deliver us from it. And so, as the *Catechism* explains, we're asking, when he is pleased to present us with these trials, that he then would support us and deliver us when we are tempted. Trials have a way of making us sense how weak we are. And what should we do then? Well, it's not that we need to strengthen ourselves, but rather, we need to appeal to God who is our strength. Remember, Paul makes much of this in Ephesians 6, when he's talking about the armor of God, and he says right before it, "Be strong in the Lord." See, we need to be strong in him, and in the power of his might. And so we appeal to God, "You support us. And as we can't fight our way through it ourselves, we ask that you would deliver us when we are tempted."

When we find ourselves in circumstances that test us, what should we do? Well, certainly, we need to be guided by God's Word, so we need to search the Scriptures. We should surround ourselves, if we are able, with fellow Christians. But we should be crying out to God, as Christ teaches us, "Deliver us from evil." And in doing so, we may enjoy that immediate deliverance, whereby the circumstances are removed, the troubles that were surrounding us, putting pressure upon us are vanished. But many times, he delivers us by giving us grace to rely upon him and overcome temptation through Christ. Notice Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 12. He was a privileged servant of the Lord, as you know. He was given many insights regarding God and God's kingdom. But in order to keep him humble and reliant upon God, the Lord sent him a trial—an affliction. We see this in 2 Corinthians 12, verse 7. Paul writes, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

Now, we don't know exactly what it was that troubled Paul. He calls it a "thorn in the flesh." Some think it was his failing eyesight that's evident in other ways, by which he writes in large letters in signing his epistles. But we don't know that for sure. What we do know is that it troubled him, it burdened him. So what did Paul do? He rightly went to God, and said, "Deliver me from

this.” But you’ll notice what it is that happens. In verse 8, we read how earnest Paul was, “I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me,” earnestly three times. But God did not remove it. He didn’t cause the circumstances, the trial, as it were, to be removed. Instead, God gave grace to Paul to overcome the trouble. Notice verse 9: “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

Well, Paul was not delivered from the affliction from the devil. He was delivered from the power of the evil, by enjoying the grace of God to overcome the temptation. And so this is a deliverance. Though the circumstances remain, he’s delivered while in those things, from the power of them. And how was it so? It was through the grace of God. And so Paul learned not to boast in himself, but to boast of his weakness, to glory in his weakness because his strength is from the Lord. And so it is with us. When we’re faced with real trials that would tempt us and afflict us, we need to call out to God to deliver us, and he may indeed deliver us absolutely from the evil. He may also deliver us from the evil by giving us grace to rely upon him, and to walk in faith and holiness while the trial continues. But notice this, either way, he’s delivering us by his grace and to his glory.

As we close, first, I wish you to remember, it is good to remember that there’s an evil one, Satan, who seeks to afflict us and even destroy us. This should rightly alarm us. Now it shouldn’t cause us anxiety and consume us. Notice that Peter acknowledges this, in 1 Peter 5, verse 8. He speaks of “your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” If you or I knew that there was a lion on the loose where we live, we would not be careless with our daily actions. Peter tells us that Satan is on the loose in this world, and he seeks to injure and destroy unsuspecting people. And so Peter writes that we’re to be sober and vigilant because of this. So we must be watchful. However, if we are watchful, we’ll not simply pay attention to the danger, we’ll be much in calling upon God for his guidance and deliverance. This is because he’s the only one who can defend us from Satan, and deliver us from Satan, and lead us in the right way away from temptation, and if indeed surrounded by it, that he can either remove it, or strengthen us by his grace to overcome it.

Secondly, we need to pray. Notice Christ’s words to his disciples, in Matthew 26, verse 41: “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” So it is that we must watch and pray. And to do this, we must be persuaded of three things. First, we must be persuaded that we will be faced with circumstances that will test us, and apart from God’s grace, they’ll lead us astray. Second, we must be persuaded that we are weak in ourselves to overcome temptation. And yet, third, we must be persuaded that our heavenly Father is both willing and able to protect and deliver us. And if we’re persuaded of these things, then we’ll be much in prayer. So think on those three things. Remember those three things. And by God’s grace then, be led to pray.

But third, though related, we need to rely upon God alone. Now this is what we should be expressing when we pray, but it’s worth emphasizing this point. We do not rely upon our praying. Rather, through prayer, we rely upon God. And so, as we watch and pray, it’s not upon our watching and praying that we’re relying, but rather, it’s upon the one to whom we pray that we rely—God, our Father which art in heaven, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. You see we learn that the whole of our life, not just the temporal needs we have—“Give us this day our daily bread;” not just the guilt we have—“Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;” but also the living out of the rest of our lives—“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” is all by God’s grace. And so, the whole of our life in this world is dependent upon our Father in heaven.

How good it is then to know that he is one who is able and willing to provide us all of these things. And may you and I learn more and more to draw near to God through Christ, that he would cause us then to have a life of holiness, not leading us into temptation, but delivering us from evil, by the grace of God in Christ, and to his praise.