TEACH ME TO pray
PART NINE
LORD, I DON'T WANT TO go there!

THE
LORD'S
prayer

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.
May your kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today the food we need,
and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven
those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evilone.
For yours is the kingdom and the power and
the glory forever.
Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13 - The New Living Translation

This is the last request in the Lord's Prayer. It's the third aspect of talking to God about our own human needs. Note that this one is purely spiritual. The essence of this particular request is for God's strength to resist temptation and for protection from Satan.

GET INVOLVED -

Share any struggles you have that are spiritual in nature.

DOES GOD TEMPT US?

This request doesn't mean that God is the cause of temptation - he isn't. Temptation comes from other sources. But God does not want us to fall under its power.

> *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say - God is tempting me. For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone, but 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 fully grown, gives birth to death.*
> *James 1:12-15*

Remember, temptation itself is not sin. It is the giving in to temptation that results in sin. It is clear from this passage that there's something within every one of us that makes us susceptible to temptation. In certain circumstances that are unique for each person, there is an internal *desire* that wants to respond to temptation. If we choose to nurture that temptation rather than taking steps to resist it and protect ourselves, then we will be *dragged away* by its sheer force.

Temptation can also be described in terms of a pregnancy. Like a seed of desire, it can be planted somewhere inside us. It'll take some time to fully grow, but when it is ready it will give birth to an act or a habit that will bring about pain and ultimately destruction. What had only been an inward enticement up until that moment, eventually turns into an outwardly sinful behaviour.

BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF -

List any temptations that you've struggled with and have been unable to resist.

Power will come from God to man in answer to the prayer of faith.
- Prayer p.85

GOD ALLOWS TEMPTATION

What God often does, however, is to allow us to face these temptations in order to strengthen our ability to resist them by trusting him. James called this a *test* rather than a *temptation*. Those of us who have young children would protect them from danger if they impulsively ran out onto a busy road. But as they grow older, we may set up circumstances to train them to protect themselves from danger. God knows our humanity and has promised that -

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. 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 stand up under it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

Rather than removing us from the presence of evil, the Lord's Prayer gives us the strength to overcome evil when we call on him.

THERE'S A WAR GOING ON... AND WE'RE ON THE FRONT LINE

The second part of this request is to protect us from the *evil* one who is responsible for all the evil in the world. Speaking to those who were plotting to put him to death, Jesus said -

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44

In Booklet 5, we talked about how Satan began his rebellion against God. Since he was exiled from heaven to our comparatively small planet, we find ourselves constantly caught up in the same warfare that began in heaven. God calls us to -

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:10-12

This Bible passage is helpful if we are to understand temptation. It is saying that if the curtain could be pulled back between the seen and the unseen in this world, we would immediately see the presence of spiritual forces of evil aggressively fighting for possession of our body, soul and spirit.

GET INVOLVED -

How real is Satan to you? Have you experienced any harassment from him? If so, in what form?

No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate.

- Great Controversy p.510

VICTORY IS WON, BUT THE WAR ISN'T OVER

This means that we can never afford to ignore Satan. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short. Revelation 12:12

Jesus ensured the final defeat of Satan when he died on the cross, and there still remains a final annihilation of the enemy to come. According to the Bible, during these last stages of the war Satan will increase his efforts to deceive humanity. Because of this, the Bible urges us to be aware of his *schemes*. It's true that no general goes into battle without giving a lot of thought to the strat egies of the enemy. That is why we're urged to -

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

THE ENEMY'S STRATEGIES

The root of sin lies in our separation from God, and in consequence the fallen state in which we now find ourselves. Satan, however, uses specific strategies - some of which are listed below - to trigger our fallen state into destructive behaviours -

- **The love of money**
  (See 1 Timothy 6:10-11)
- **Idolatry** - making anything more important than God
  (See 1 Corinthians 10:14)
- **Sexual immorality** - the story of Joseph is a wonderful example of how to resist this temptation
  (See Genesis 39:6-12)
- **Desires that are particularly relevant to young people** (See 2 Timothy 2:22)
- **Discouragement from Satan's accusations about our past sins**
  (See Zechariah 3:1-5; Revelation 12:10)
- **Complacency about the promised return of Jesus at the end of time**
  (See Matthew 24:42-44)

The *Lord's Prayer* asks God to rescue us from Satan's temptations, and urges us to call on God to deliver us from Satan's cunning strategies, and to develop the strength to walk away from temptations.

GET INVOLVED -

Do any of these particular temptations continually surface for you? Have you been able to conquer them?

SATAN IS A DEFEATED ENEMY

We should remember not to be concerned about seeing a demon behind every bush, and live in fear because of evil supernatural forces. The Bible tells us that Satan is a defeated enemy.

Jesus' last cry as he died on the cross was - *It is finished*. (John 19:30) This was a declaration of victory over Satan. Throughout the terrible experience during his trial and the agony of his crucifixion, Jesus threw down the gauntlet by declaring -

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scripture be fulfilled that says it must happen this way? Matthew 26:53-54

Satan could not believe that Jesus would voluntarily choose to die on behalf of the human race. Speaking through the mob during the dying moments of Jesus' life, Satan urged him to come down from the cross.

The chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. He saved others, they said, but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, I am the Son of God. Matthew 27:41-44

That would have been a very powerful temptation for Jesus. Had he chosen to abort the mission at that moment and leave us on our own, we would all have been left to the destructive agencies of Satan. The consequences of our rebellion would never have been resolved. But such was Jesus' love for us that he saw his ordeal through to the bitter end, and paid the ultimate price for the rebellion of the human race against God. This is the turning point in our understanding of Jesus.

GET INVOLVED -

Has the significance of the death of Jesus - as a substitute for your death - opened up your heart to him? If you are struggling with this, can you identify why?

JESUS' VICTORY OVER SATAN

The Bible describes the impact of the death and resurrection of Jesus on our destiny in vivid detail.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. Revelation 12:10

Because of that momentous victory, help is available to us in the face of temptation and Satan's desire to control our life. In the midst of the fiercest aspects of spiritual warfare we can - *be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power*. Ephesians 6:10

It's critical to know how to fight this war in order to defeat the enemy. The first thing to notice is that for us it's a battle in which we are **defending** ourselves against Satan's attacks, rather than beginning a fight against him. The Bible repeatedly encourages us to *stand firm* in our relationship with Jesus. The battle Satan is fighting against the followers of Jesus is focused primarily on trying to disconnect them from their intimacy with Jesus. If that happens, all is lost. So it is not so much a battle to overcome particular sins in our life - they are only secondary. It is more a battle to keep our trust in Jesus, and what he has done for us.

Those who will put on the whole armour of God and devote some time every day to meditation and prayer and to the study of the Scriptures will be connected with heaven and will have a saving, transforming influence upon those around them.

- Prayer p.22

ARMOUR FOR THE BATTLE

To illustrate this, God uses the symbol of an ancient Roman soldier putting on pieces of armour before he enters battle. (See Ephesians 6:11-18) Those pieces of armour represent things we can do, such as -

- Embracing the truth about Jesus' death and resurrection on our behalf
- Responding to this truth by living a life of integrity before God
- Sharing with others what you know about the life and work of Jesus
- Trusting that God loves you even in the worst circumstances of life
- Learning to know God through reading the Bible
- Establishing regular intimate times of prayer with God
- Receiving the presence and empowerment of God's Holy Spirit

GET INVOLVED -

Which pieces of your armour are in good repair, and which are a little rusty?

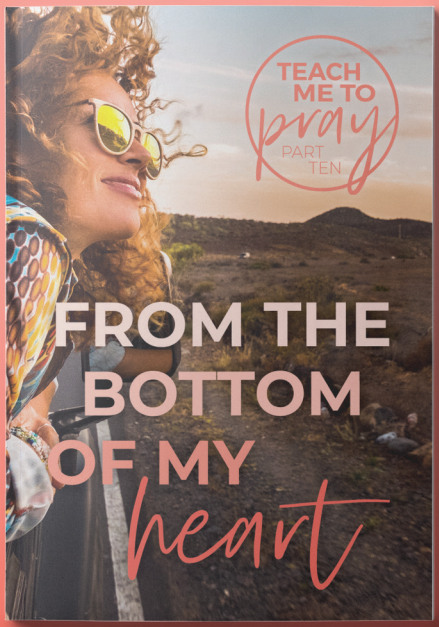
THE SECRET OF BEING ALERT

This last piece of armour is an essential one. On the night before Jesus died, he asked his followers to stay with him as he prayed for strength to go through the enormous ordeal that lay ahead of him. Three times he came back to them and found them sleeping. His desperate plea for them to - *Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation* - went unheeded. (See Matthew 26:41) The Bible says that their spirit was willing, but their humanity was weak. Fifty days later when God poured out his Holy Spirit on them, the power to resist temptation and defeat Satan was released in a way that they had never experienced before. It is this that is the main piece of armour, and the one that God encourages you to ask for in your spiritual struggles.

So, when we pray as Jesus taught us, and we ask - *And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evilone* - it includes a lot more than we first thought. It can only be prayed in sincerity when we are prepared to take God's word, resist temptation, and even avoid circumstances, people or things that we know will be a temptation.

GET INVOLVED –

My Father in heaven, your name is holy, you are an awesome God. Thank you for sending Jesus who defeated Satan when he died on the cross. Father I confess that alone I cannot resist or defeat Satan's temptations. Please...



PART 10:
FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART

Connecting with God in prayer is an act of worship - acknowledging the blessings God has given us and expressing our gratitude to Him.

Email or call Hope Channel to receive Part 10 of the Teach Me to Pray series to continue in your prayer journey.

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