



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE PRAYER CLOSET MINISTRIES, INC.

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VOLUME XVI I

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2014

ISSUE 1

## Praying Against Evil

In the Model Prayer, Jesus Christ teaches His people how to pray. Prayer is the gift of Jesus Christ to every believer. By dying on the Cross and being raised from the dead, He has opened the door to access with God to all who trust in Him. He has also given the Holy Spirit to every believer. The Holy Spirit enables us to take advantage of the access to the Father that Christ has purchased for us.

Not only has Jesus done all this for us, but He also teaches us how to pray to our Father. He starts by reminding us of who we pray to. We are to pray to our Father. He is not a distant deity. He is not an unconcerned Being. He is a merciful Father who desires to have fellowship with us and to hear from us. He reminds us that our Father is in heaven, making plain His greatness and power. When we ask of our Father, He is more than able to do above and beyond what we ask. He has the power to answer our prayers!

Jesus teaches us to focus on our Father in the opening of the prayer. He directs us to pray that the name of God would be exalted. We are to pray that God's greatness would be revealed in our lives and through the lives of others. We are to plead that He will be made known as the glorious, almighty God.

Jesus then exhorts us to plead for the coming of God's kingdom. We are to ask for the

kingdom to advance in our lives by greater surrender to Christ. We are to cry out for others to surrender to Christ through the good news of Christ. At the same time, we are to pray for Christ to come, manifesting the kingdom in its final, glorious form.

Jesus then instructs us to pray for the Father's will to be done. We are to cry out for understanding in the revealed will of God, along with power to apply and obey His Word in our lives. At the same

time, we are to pray for grace to accept whatever He allows to come into our lives, trusting Him and glorifying Him in the midst of it.

In the fourth petition, Jesus turns our attention to praying for our daily bread. We are to depend on our Father in prayer. We manifest this dependence by asking Him to provide daily for us and for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Since Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread, He also teaches us to pray for daily forgiveness. We need our daily bread i.e. our needs met. However, our greatest need is forgiveness and cleansing. We daily need cleansing from God. As believers, sin is still a reality in our lives. We need to maintain our fellowship with God by seeking His cleansing daily through confession and repentance.

In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we examine the sixth petition, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (**Matthew 6:13**). This petition teaches us about our need for victory over sin and over our enemy Satan. We will look at what this petition means, its connection to the previous petition, why this petition is crucial to us, and how to pray it.

## What Is The Meaning Of The Sixth Petition?

In the sixth petition of the Model Prayer, Jesus says, "And lead us not into temptation, but

deliver us from evil” (**Matthew 6:13**). Some would divide these two phrases and make “deliver us from evil” the seventh petition. However, they are intimately connected. They cannot be separated.

### **Lead us not into temptation**

The word “temptation” refers to enticement to moral evil, to that which is offensive and abominable to God. When Jesus teaches us to pray this petition, He calls on us to pray that God will grant us the power and support to face the temptation to sin. We are to pray that God would intervene and grant us what we need on a daily basis in this struggle.

We can pray that God will remove temptations from us. It’s impossible to escape temptation in this world. However, as a child of God, you can ask your Father to steer you away from temptation, especially in those areas that you struggle against the hardest. David prayed that God would keep him from temptations that were too strong for him to resist, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from great transgression” (**Psalms 19:13**). Your Father is merciful and He can and will hear this petition. Your Father can limit what you have to face.

Yet, there are times when God does allow us to face temptation. A child of God will be confronted with the temptation to sin. Part of the preparation for heaven is confronting and battling temptations. By battling temptation, it is preparing us for the greater glory and joy of heaven. It’s also that way that God teaches us to trust Him and to grow in holiness. We will face temptation.

Yet, it’s in these times, that we can cry out to God for the strength and support to deal with temptation. We can cry out to Him to preserve us in the midst of our struggles to yield to the flesh’s desires. Your Father is always willing to hear and answer you in the midst of the daily battles of life. This petition is asking God for the help to fight and resist the enticement to evil. It

is a plea for grace and power to battle against our flesh and its evil desires and inclinations.

### **Deliver us from evil**

I believe that this refers to our enemy Satan. We are to cry out for God’s help in our daily skirmishes with the enemy. The Word of God tells us that our enemy the devil actively seeks to attack and devour believers (**1 Peter 5:8**). The Word of God also tells us that we are to resist the devil (**James 4:7**). The Word of God calls Satan “the tempter” (**Matthew 4:3**).

Much of our temptation comes from Satan and his forces. We are to ask for victory over Satan and his forces. The child of God wants more than protection; the child of God wants victory! We are to call on God for the defeat of the enemy and all his schemes for our lives. For the child of God, it’s not enough to be sheltered from sin and the enemy, we long for victory!

This petition has a future focus too! When we pray this petition, we are looking forward to the final victory over sin and the devil. We are praying for victory and preservation today. However, we are also asking for that day when these enemies will be completely vanquished and we will be free and victorious from them. When you pray this petition, pray it with hope! Pray it with the expectation of the final victory! We cannot be satisfied until the final goal is reached – when our enemies shall be no more, the dangers of sin, the devil, and death no longer threaten us, and the day of complete salvation and perfect victory comes.

This petition ought to give every child of God hope and confidence. The daily clashes with sin and our spiritual enemies are hard and exhausting. Yet, they will end one day. They will be finished one day. When Christ consummates all things, sin and the evil one will be forever vanquished and we will have sweet, eternal victory. You are more than a conqueror through Christ who loved you and gave Himself for you. We are to pray this petition until the final victory!

## The Connection To The Previous Petition

As we have looked at each petition of the Model prayer, I hope you have seen how connected they are. The same is true for this petition. There is a close connection between the fifth and sixth petitions. In the fifth petition, Jesus teaches us to pray daily for forgiveness. Now, in the sixth petition, He instructs us to pray for victory over sin and the devil now and forever. How are these petitions connected?

The fifth petition is the basis for the sixth petition. Our forgiveness with God is the basis for our being made holy. Because we have experienced forgiveness from sin, we are now to attack and fight against sin. We experience the pardon of sin in order to be liberated from sin. We are forgiven from sin in order that we might be set free from the pollution and presence of sin. The forgiveness of sin paves the way for sanctification or growth in holiness and resisting temptation. When a child of God experiences forgiveness of sin, he begins of the battle against sin and temptation. The child of God then labors and strives against the sin in his life. Forgiveness leads to holiness! It leads to the lifelong pursuit of victory over sin and the evil one.

The prayer for forgiveness can never be separated from the plea for strength and grace to fight temptation. The cry for pardon cannot be separated from the prayer for victory over sin and the devil. As long as we have to pray for pardon of our sin, we have not reached the goal. As long as we have to confess and repent of our sin, we must call on God to help us in the daily battles.

We are still sinful and we still break the commandments of God. We still yield to temptation. The child of God can never be satisfied with such a condition. The sorrow that we feel when we have to seek God for forgiveness

should impel us to plead for grace and power to fight against sin.

The fifth petition prepares the way for the sixth petition. By praying for our sin to be forgiven, it drives us to pray for help against sin and temptation. It compels us to plead for power to resist the devil and all his wicked schemes. These petitions cannot be divided; we must pray them both. Just as we pray daily for pardon, we are to pray daily for strength and help in the struggle with sin and the evil one.

## Why Do We Pray This Petition?

What should motivate the believer to pray this petition on a daily basis? The following are reasons that should spur us to pray this particular petition. These reasons show us our great need to obey Christ in this aspect of our prayer lives. Why is this petition a necessity for our praying?

*First, this petition shows us that we are in a daily battle with sin.* When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, it is the beginning of the war with sin. Before Christ, we are willing slaves of sin. After Christ, we have a new nature and the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. We now have to seek our Father and trust Him for help in this war. If the believer didn't struggle with sin, why would Jesus teach us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil?" The fact that Jesus teaches us to pray this shows the reality of our daily struggle with sin.

Believers have to realize that the devil, the world, and the flesh are powerfully ready to draw us away from Christ and His Word and to ensnare us. I can't emphasize this enough; it is no exaggeration! Satan is always ready to trap and destroy us (**1 Chronicles 21:1**). This world of evil people is full of traps and seductions for believers, and we are always in danger of being overcome by them (**Luke 21:34-35**). The remaining, indwelling sin in the believer, i.e. the flesh, is always working against the believer to destroy him (**James 1:14**).

Maybe you've never given your life to Jesus Christ. You look at those who profess

Christianity and you believe that they are hypocrites. You see their failures and their struggles. You reject Christianity because you see the sins of others and feel that there is nothing to the faith.

Yet, this petition speaks to you. Christians are not perfect. They struggle with sin. They battle temptation. Sometimes they fall. That is because there is a daily war going on. They are battling daily with sin. Yet, because of their faith in Jesus, they repent and pray for pardon. They move on. Don't be fooled. Don't let what you think you see keep you from Christ. Christians battle sin and sometimes fail. However, they come back to God, experience pardon, and move on, renewing the commitment to fight sin.

Maybe you're a disappointed believer. Maybe you've seen Christians sin. You've seen someone you had confidence in fail. This petition speaks to you. Every believer is in a battle. We are in the war against the flesh. There is an enemy with forces tempting and enticing believers. Sometimes believers fail. Yet, your focus should be on Christ who forgives and who gives strength and grace in these battles. At the same time, don't presume; you may be the next one to fall if you don't pray and depend on Christ.

*Second, this petition points out the reality of our spiritual enemy.* These words point to the fact that Satan is alive and well. The devil is not a figment of the Christian's imagination. He is not a symbol of evil. He is not a mythological figure created and passed down to our day. Our enemy is a real spiritual being who hates God and God's people. He labors to tempt, entice, deceive, and trap those who profess faith in Jesus Christ. He strives to oppose the church of Jesus Christ and His work in this world. He is a spiteful, cruel enemy who works through his army of demons (**Ephesians 6:12**).

Jesus' words in this petition presuppose that there is a war and that there is an enemy. He says, "deliver us from evil." The word "deliver" means to protect, guard, or ward off.

This certainly indicates an enemy and a war. If there is no enemy, why pray for protection? If there are no schemes and traps of the evil one, why pray for Christ to guard us? If there is no enemy on the offensive, why ask Christ to ward off that enemy and his attacks?

If you deny the reality of the personal, spiritual being of Satan, then you will have to deny Jesus Christ. You can't claim to believe in Jesus and then deny or disbelieve what Jesus taught. Do away with the devil and you will have to do away with Jesus Christ. Jesus makes clear that there is an enemy. He emphasizes that we need help in this war. That is why we pray for the Father to deliver us – to protect us, to guard us, and to ward off all the attacks of our enemy.

*Next, this petition points out our weakness.* If Christ teaches us to pray for help, that necessarily means we cannot face this battle on our own. We cannot conquer the lure to evil without divine help. We cannot resist the devil in our own strength. The very fact that Christ teaches us to pray this way forces us to see our weakness and our need to rely on Him.

Think about all the things that God has done. He has given us His Holy Spirit to live inside of us. He has provided us with the written Word. He offers us the spiritual armor of **Ephesians 6**. He has granted us the privilege and weapon of prayer. He has called us to fellowship with other believers. What rich blessings the Father has bestowed on us! Yet, these blessings reveal to us that we cannot make it on our own. We have to rely on our Father and the tools that He has given us. The very presence of these blessings, these tools, shows us our weakness and our need to depend on Him.

Sin and Satan will devour us if we do not depend on our Father and use the weapons that He has given us. True believers in Jesus Christ who have experienced regeneration and forgiveness still have moral corruption and a host of weaknesses inside of them. These words of Jesus do point out the help we have. Yet, they manifest our great weakness and our daily need to pray and depend on our Father. **As long as we imagine in any sense that we can face**

**and deal with temptation and our enemy on our own, this prayer will have no room in hearts.**

*Finally, this petition reveals the believer's hatred of sin and desire to be holy.* Notice again the wording of this petition, "And lead **us** not into temptation, but deliver **us** from evil." This is the prayer of the believer! This is the prayer of someone experienced the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and has entered into the life of faith in Christ. Only the regenerated people of God can pray this prayer. Only those who have come to know God as Father will and can pray this prayer.

No unregenerate, unbelieving rebel against God, dead in his sin, would ever hate sin so much that he would ask God to protect him from it. No person outside of Christ will seek God for strength to face the temptations to sin. Apart from Christ, no one will cry out for deliverance from sin. Hypocrites pray temporal blessings; true believers pray for spiritual blessings.

The believer has come to a deep and growing knowledge of his personal sinfulness. He has a hatred of sin because it is against God and His holy, blessed commandments and it dishonors His name. This petition flows out of the believer's hatred of sin and his sincere desire to love and honor God. The believer does not want to yield to sin, but to overcome it and to glorify God. Because of his view of sin and his desire to be holy and honor God, the believer prays, "and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

## **How Do I Pray This Petition?**

We have already looked at what this petition means for the believer and how it is connected to "and forgive us our debts." We have also examined why we need to pray this to our Father. Now, we need to see how to put this petition into practice. The following are some ways that you might consider applying it to your life.

**First, we are to pray that God will subdue the flesh.** In **Psalm 51**, David confesses his sin of committing adultery with Bathsheba and having her husband killed in battle. David cries out to God, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (**Psalm 51:6**). In other words, he is asking God to subdue his flesh that made it so easy for him to commit sin. These words are a confession of his sinfulness and his dependence on God's almighty power and sovereign grace for the removal of that sinfulness.

A "clean heart" signifies affections and motives free from sin's pollution. "Create" implies the necessity of divine intervention. "In me" is literally "for me" or "to me," suggesting that this work is a gift of God's grace. By praying "renew a right spirit in me," he asks for a firm, stable, and unwavering spirit free from faithlessness and fickleness.

**Psalm 51:6** is a prayer for God to subdue the flesh. It is a plea for God to work in us and to change us – to create holy affections and motives in us. It is a cry to renew in us a stable, unwavering commitment to holiness. It is a desperate prayer for God to subdue the flesh and its evil desires.

Our greatest enemy is inside of us. We do have an enemy that seeks to tempt and entice us to sin. Yet, he can do this because of our flesh. We have to realize that our hearts are our greatest tempters! If Satan were dead and buried, our hearts would still draw us to evil. We need God's work of grace in our lives to subdue the flesh and to create in us holy affections and a committed spirit. This is what it means to pray this petition.

**Second, we are to pray that God will empower us by and guide us with His Word.** The Word of God says in **Psalm 119:133**, "Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me." David asks God to teach him the Word of God and to lead him in obedience. As the believer saturates his life with the Word and seeks to obey it, it can protect and help him in this war against sin and the devil. Apart from the Word of God, we are

left vulnerable and susceptible to temptations and the traps of the devil.

There is a powerful connection between ordering your steps in the Word of God and the avoidance of sin. David is asking that God would help him to stay in the Word, giving him the power to bridle the flesh and not be overcome by any sin through the Word of God – whether it is preached, taught, or read.

This must be our same prayer. We must ask God to make the Word of God effectual in our lives. In other words, we should cry out to Him to make the Word come alive to us – that it jumps off the page at us. It should be our prayer that He will open our eyes and pierce our hearts with the Bible, helping us grow in holiness and in avoidance of sin. The commands, warnings, promises, and precepts of the Word teach us how to please God and how to fight sin and the devil. Praying that God would make His Word come alive to us and guide us in His Word is a way of putting this petition into practice.

**Next, we are to pray that God would keep us from being tempted.** It is true that every believer will face temptation. The early church father Augustine once wrote, “A saint’s whole life is temptation.” It’s a reality for every child of God. At the same time it is true that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear and that He will provide a way of escape for us (**1 Corinthians 10:13**). Yet, this petition does give us the freedom to ask God to work providentially to keep us from temptations, especially those against which we have the hardest struggle.

We have already looked at **Psalms 19:13**, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from great transgression.” In this prayer, David is praying that God, in His providential control, will keep him from facing temptations to sin that are too powerful for him to resist. He pleads that God will work in his life to keep him from being exposed to those temptations that have the strongest lure on him.

We must forsake arrogant pride. We must turn away from a heightened sense of self-righteousness. We need to pray sometimes that God in mercy will protect us from some temptations. There are some temptations that it’s better for us not to be exposed to. Our prayer for this should be fueled by **Proverbs 16:18**, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” We will face plenty of temptation in our lives. It’s not a denial of **1 Corinthians 10:13** to pray this way; it’s a humble, wise way to pray sometimes.

I know my weaknesses. I know the areas of life where I have the greatest struggle. For that reason, I pray that God will protect me from temptation in these areas. Have I faced temptation in these areas since I’ve prayed this? Yes, I have.

However, I’m convinced that I haven’t faced as much because of seeking the Father in this way. I believe that He has steered me out of situations where I would have been exposed to temptation in these weak areas. I do believe God can give me strength in the face of any temptation. However, I am grateful when He works in my life and keeps me from facing such moments.

**This petition instructs us to pray for the defeat of our enemy Satan.** The Word of God says in **Romans 16:20**, “And the God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” This verse is an allusion to **Genesis 3:15**. In this first promise of the gospel in **Genesis 3**, God promises to defeat Satan and evil. God did this through the death and resurrection of Christ. At the cross and the empty tomb, Christ dealt a deathblow to Satan and to sin. One day He will consummate this defeat fully and finally at His second coming.

Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, we can pray for deliverance from Satan’s schemes and traps. We are to call on God to deliver us from the evil one and all his wicked attacks. Yet, we must go on the offensive against him. This verse speaks of bruising Satan under the feet of believers. The final and total

defeat of Satan will be at Christ's second coming. Yet, we can have victories in this life. We can experience victory over his schemes and traps now – today in our lives and areas.

How do we go on the offensive against the evil one? We do this by praying for the salvation of sinners. Pray that Satan's strongholds in your life and in your area or city will be broken and destroyed. Plead that God will help believers stand bold in faith and righteousness. Cry out to God to stir and empower believers to share their faith in Jesus Christ. Ask God to dispel the darkness of sin in your life and in your community or city. Proclaim and defend the truths of the Bible. The Christian is to fight Satan not only in his own heart, but also in the church and the world. This is going on the offensive against the enemy. Christ has won the victory; now we are to live, preach, and minister in the light of that victory.

**This petition constrains us to pray that God will help us to watch our lives.** The Word of God says in **Matthew 26:41**, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is indeed willing but the flesh weak." The word "watch" means to be on guard and to be on alert. It is considering all the ways that temptation may sneak up on us and attack us. In other words, "Don't be caught off guard!"

Notice that Jesus combines watching and praying. We are to pray that God would not lead us into temptation and to deliver us from evil. However, we are responsible before God to watch – to be on our guard and to be alert to the temptations and schemes of the enemy. The believer should ask for the grace to be watchful and alert. The Old Testament equivalent of **Matthew 26:41** is **Proverbs 4:23**, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Our daily prayer has to be for God to help us guard our hearts and lives by being alert and on the guard against sin.

Why does Jesus teach us to watch and pray? It's because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. By the new birth, God has given believers a new life with new desires and

affections. Yet, the remnants of that old fallen nature that once dominated us still remain in us. We still struggle with its old desires, tendencies, and habits (**Romans 7**). It constantly struggles against the Spirit of God indwelling us (**Galatians 5:17**).

This is why we have to be alert and on our guard. This "weakness" of the flesh is real and dangerous. The believer is eager to endure and overcome temptation. Yet, the indwelling sin, the flesh, is utterly helpless and willing to indulge in temptation. In **Matthew 26:41**, Jesus calls us to be on the alert and on the guard because of this. We are to pray for the grace to be on the guard and to pray. This is what it means to put the sixth petition of the Model Prayer in action.

**This petition emphasizes our need to resist Satan.** Since he is the tempter, we are to resist him and his schemes. The Word of God says in **James 4:7**, "Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you." How do we resist the devil? First, we submit to God (**4:7a**). We yield our wills to Him and seek to obey His Word and His will. Second, we draw near to God by prayer (**James 4:8a**). The closer we live to God, the more we know of His comfort, support, and power, the easier it is to resist the enticements and temptations of the devil. Finally, we must live pure lives, inside and out (**James 4:8b**). We must have clean hands and pure hearts. We are to confess and repent of sin and ask for God's help to grow in holiness. We must not give any room for the devil to work in our lives (**Ephesians 4:27**).

**This petition points out our need to pray for a hatred of sin.** Sin is the great danger for the child of God. We are to avoid it, resist it, and overcome it. Unfortunately, we live in a world saturated by sin. This can dull our sensitivity to sin. We ought to ask the Spirit of God to fill us with renewed desire for holiness and a deepening hatred of sin. We need to grow in the attitude exhibited by the early church father Anselm when he wrote, "If sin were on one side, and hell on the other, I would rather leap into hell than willingly sin against my God."

**This petition reminds us to pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ.** When Jesus teaches us to pray, He says, “and lead **US** not into temptation, but deliver **US** from evil.” This is not just, what we pray for ourselves. We are to pray this for our brothers and sisters. The Model Prayer reminds us to intercede for the family of God. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are the same struggle. We are all battling sin and Satan. We need each other, especially praying for one another in the midst of the warfare. Pray for God’s protection and strength in the lives of the believers around you.

**This petition encourages us to pray for restoration after we have yielded to temptation.** This petition tells us that we are in a daily battle with sin and its evil allurements. Sometimes we will yield to temptation. Sometimes we will fall. Yet, this is not the end. We can come to God and pray, “forgive me” as we saw in the fifth petition. Then we renew our commitment to Christ and pray once again, “lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil.”

This is what David did in **Psalms 51**. He confessed his sin to God and asked for His forgiveness. Then he said, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit” (**Psalms 51:12**). Sin interrupts the believer’s fellowship with God, destroying his joy and weakening his assurance of God’s favor. David prays for God to renew that joy and assurance after his confession and repentance. He also asks for God to sustain him, to hold him up and preserve him from falling into sin.

When you sin, run back to God. Confess your sin and repent. Plead for the restoration of joy and assurance. Moreover, once again, pray that He will strengthen you and uphold you in the face of future temptations. This is what the Word of God means by the words, “uphold me with thy free spirit.” Call on God to hold you up and sustain you that you might not fall into temptation again.

**This petition urges us to look forward to the full and final deliverance from sin and Satan.** We are not to pray for victory in the daily struggles. We are to cry out to God for the total, complete, and final deliverance from sin and Satan forever. This sixth petition is filled with hope. It looks to that day when we will no longer be plagued with the temptation to sin or the traps of Satan. It looks to the day when we will be completely free from all evil forever and forever, eternity without end!

This petition should be on our lips daily until we breathe our last breath. One day it will be answered completely and totally. Pray this petition in hope. Pray it with confidence. Let this petition give you strength and hope in the daily struggles. Draw encouragement from the fact that one day you will have complete deliverance from sin and Satan forever!

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