

New Introduction

Over the last three weeks, Pastor Kevin has been teaching about hypocrisy and some of the disciplines of the Christian life, specifically how hypocrisy is seen in giving, prayer, and fasting. Today, we are going to take a little step back and look specifically at prayer. We will take a look at how one prayer recorded in the Bible is regularly prayed with hypocrisy by a significant number of people and then we will take a look at how this prayer should be used properly to avoid praying with hypocrisy. Our passage for today, is found in Matthew 6:9-13. This passage is a very well-known passage. It is the most memorized and recited passage in the entire Bible. This passage is known and used by more denominations, religions, cults, and sects than any other passage in the Bible; many of them doing so with much of the same hypocrisy that Pastor Kevin has been teaching about. Today's passage is most commonly called The Lord's Prayer. It is my hope that as I share with you what God has taught me about prayer as I prepared this message, that you would also be blessed and learn something new that will make your prayers a time of sweet communion with God and not a time of hypocritical and meaningless babbling. Since the most beautifully written, well known, and most often memorized version of this passage is from the King James Version of the Bible, I decided to use that as the text for this message. Would you please stand with me as I read the passage for today?

Original Introduction:

About 2 years ago, Pastor Kevin spent three weeks teaching on the very same passage we are going to look at this morning; Matthew 6:9-13. When we started our current study on the book of Matthew, Pastor Kevin asked me to pick a passage to preach on. As I was praying about what passage to choose, I remembered that Kevin had already preached on this passage not that long ago. Because he already taught on this passage, I thought that it might be a good passage to choose so that Pastor Kevin did not have to preach on the same passage twice in such a short period of time and so that all of you might get a different perspective on this passage. Now, I **will not** be spending three weeks on this passage, but it is my hope that as I share with you what God has taught me about prayer as I prepared this sermon, that you would also be blessed and learn something new that will make your prayers a time of sweet communion with God. Since the most beautifully written, well-known, and most often memorized version of this passage is from the King James Version of the Bible, I decided to use that as the text for this sermon. Would you please stand with me as I read the passage for today?

Scripture Reading:

- 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
- 10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
- 11 Give us this day our daily bread.
- 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
- 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is part of the Sermon on the Mount that we have been studying for many weeks. As you remember, this lengthy sermon, while taught in the hearing of a large crowd, was actually a sermon directed to the disciples of Jesus. Were you to give this sermon a catchy modern title you might choose something like "A treatise on Christian Living" as it covers just about every aspect of what a true believer's life looks like. The particular passage we are going to study today is commonly referred to "The Lord's Prayer" and it is recorded in both the gospels of Matthew and Luke. However, it is not found in either the gospels of Mark or John. Why we find it in two of the gospels and not in the other two could be a sermon for another time. This morning, as we look at this prayer we are first going to look at what the Lord's Prayer is not and how it is frequently practiced wrongly, and then we are going to take a deep dive into what the Lord's Prayer is and how when practiced rightly it can come alive for you and enrich your prayer time.

What the Lord's Prayer is not:

In our world today, the Holy and sacred words often referred to as "The Lord's Prayer" have become many things to many people. There are thousands, maybe millions, or even billions of people across the world who can and do recite this prayer from memory on a regular basis; even some of the most unlikely people in the world can clearly and accurately recite this prayer on demand. A couple years ago I attended a funeral that Pastor Kevin was doing for a member of the Outlaws MC. Right in the middle of Pastor Kevin's message, this enormous crowd of probably more than 200 outlaw bikers broke out in a clear and accurate recitation of The Lord's Prayer. As amazing as this was, I am willing to bet that the vast majority of those people really did not understand the significance of what they were saying and instead were just reciting words they learned as a child. Why is this? I believe it is because tradition, misinformation, and deception have clouded the thinking of people and people have come to believe all kinds of falsehoods about the passage often referred to as "The Lord's Prayer". Here are just a few examples of the falsehoods people today believe about this prayer:

Many people believe it is a magical incantation and that:

- You can get supernatural, spiritual, or special powers by reciting
- You can get God to give you the desires of your heart by reciting
- You can convince God to perform miracles for you by reciting
- You can get God to do things for you or other people by reciting

Many people also believe that this prayer is some kind of mystical mantra that:

- Has some kind of spiritual or supernatural power in and of itself
- Can bring you good luck or good fortune by repeating incessantly
- Can somehow bring about material blessings for you or your family
- Regular recitation of this prayer is a penance for your sin
- Completing a specified number of recitations of this prayer will actually absolve you of your sin

None of these things, not a single one, are true or even have even a little bit of truth in them. Every one of these statements is a different lie crafted by Satan and distributed by false teachers to misinformed or uninformed people.

Finally, this prayer really should not be called "The Lord's Prayer" at all... Wait! What did you say? You are telling me that something I have been taught my whole life is not true? Yup, welcome to reality. If this prayer should not be called "The Lord's Prayer" then what should it be called? Great question! The prayer recorded here should not be called "The Lord's Prayer" simply because Jesus is not actually praying in this passage – Instead, He is teaching his disciples about prayer. In John 17 Jesus does actually pray for current and future believers, his disciples, and much more but that is also a sermon for another time.

So what is The Lord's Prayer?

OK, if this is not a prayer that Jesus actually prayed what is it? A more accurate description for this section might be "A Discourse on The Structure and Order of Prayer" or perhaps we just make it simple and call it what it really is: "The Disciples Prayer". Why would we do that? First, remember that the audience for the Sermon on the Mount is not the crowds gathered around, but rather the disciples. The crowds gathered around Jesus likely gleaned much information and knowledge from listening to Jesus teach his disciples, perhaps some even came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but the people were not the primary audience for this teaching. Second, if you read the account of this teaching in the Gospel of Luke (Luke Chapter 11), Jesus teaches his disciples about prayer in a direct response to a question from one of His disciples. That request was "Lord, teach us to pray as John also taught his disciples to pray". *For clarity sake, the John mentioned here is John the Baptist, not the apostle John.* The passage in Luke goes on to say: Jesus answers him (the disciple) by saying: "When ye pray, say,...". Therefore, this is more accurately described as the disciple's prayer, because it

is an outline that Jesus used to teach His disciples how to pray, not a prayer that Jesus Himself prayed. Since every believer is called to be a disciple of Jesus, this prayer was given to you as well as the 12 original disciples. It is a gift to you from Jesus Himself. A gift you should treasure and use each and every day of your life.

We, as believers, also need to understand that prayer is the most powerful tool, armor, and weapon that we have at our disposal. Prayer is the greatest privilege a Christian can enjoy and the heaviest burden they can bear. In our daily lives we often relegate prayer to a few sentences uttered before a meal or bed time. I am guilty of this, my prayer life is nowhere near as deep and meaningful as it should be, so understand that I am preaching more to myself than to you.

However, when we come to understand what prayer truly is, the power it wields, and the impact it makes on us we should be awed and amazed by it, consumed by it, and driven to spend all our time on our knees in prayer. I want to share a quote from the late R.C. Sproul with you, and then I am going to give you a few seconds to reflect on the quote:

“Prayer does change things, all kinds of things. But the most important thing it changes is us. As we engage in this communion with God more deeply and come to know the One with whom we are speaking more intimately, that growing knowledge of God reveals to us all the more brilliantly who we are and our need to change in conformity to Him. Prayer changes us profoundly.” - R.C. Sproul

Now that we understand that the Disciple’s Prayer is really an example of how someone who prays should address God and how they could order or structure their prayer time. We will look at how we can apply this outline to our daily prayer time. The Disciple’s Prayer essentially breaks prayer in to the following broad categories:

- Adoration – Verses 9-10
- Supplication – Verse 11
- Forgiveness – Verse 12
- Protection – Verse 13

We will look at each of these broad categories as we look into the specific meanings of each verse.

As an outline for prayer, The Disciples Prayer is something that can and should be committed to the memory of every believer so you can reference it at any time. Not for the purpose of rote recitation, but instead so that you can easily use it as an outline or guide to help you focus your prayer times. You might then ask: “How can I use The Disciple’s Prayer to guide or focus my prayer times?” Well my friends, that is an excellent question and I am glad you asked because we are going to spend the rest of our time together this morning doing a deep dive into The Disciples Prayer, what each part means, and how you can apply it to your daily prayer time. Are you ready to dive into the deep end with me?

Adoration:

Adoration is the act of showing deep love, respect, and/or worship. It is recognizing and acknowledging the greatness of God for no other reason than that He is God. It is giving proper respect to God as you approach Him in prayer.

Let’s take an in depth look at verse 9: “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name – or for those of you who do not speak Shakespearean English you might say: “This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, make your name Holy”. Jesus instructs us to open our

prayers by using a very familiar salutation. A salutation that brings to light the relationship of God to us; one similar to that of a father and a child. While God is still king, creator, and ruler of all creation, Jesus teaches us to use the familiar here. Instead of starting our prayers with a title of royalty like your majesty, your holiness, your grace, etc., we are instead taught to just address God in our prayers as father. Yet we are then immediately called upon to praise, adore, honor, glorify, and exalt the title of father by the phrase “Hallowed by Your name...” or in other words, may your name be made Holy, set aside, consecrated, revered, and honored. Perhaps one way to rewrite this first phrase into more modern language would be something like this: “My Dad who lives in heaven, may you make your name holy and honored to all people and nations in the whole wide world.” Which specific words you use are not important, what is important is the attitude you show in your prayers. Starting our prayer time by praising and honoring the name of God helps to elevate God to His proper position while reminding us of our lowly place in comparison to Him. When taken seriously, this process of adoration helps frame our prayers and give us perspective as we approach the throne of the Almighty. It becomes far more difficult to pray asking that God give you the lake house or car that you want when you start your prayer time with an understanding of who God really is and what you are in comparison to His holiness.

Jesus moves on in His teaching from the salutation to a very bold and gutsy statement. He says: “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.” Hmm, you might be wondering how this is a bold and gutsy statement, it sounds pretty generic? I would challenge you to take a closer look at what this statement is actually saying, I believe that once you do, you would not want to utter it flippantly. Let’s start our look at this passage by putting it into more modern words. This could be updated to read something like this: “May you bring your kingdom to earth quickly. And may that Kingdom on earth be exactly like your kingdom in heaven.” Essentially, you are first acknowledging God’s sovereign will over all creation, both on heaven and earth, while asking that God’s will goes forth without hindrance here on earth just like it does in heaven, where there is no evil or opposition. Are you starting to see why this is such a bold and gutsy statement? But, let’s take this one step further. Now, imagine if all Christians around the world earnestly and whole-heartedly prayed that God’s will would be done in their personal lives and circumstances just like it is in heaven. What would our world look like? How would our churches be different? How about our marriages or families? Are you truly willing to honestly ask that God’s will be done in your life exactly like it is in heaven? Without delay or hindrance?

The will of the natural man is never in line with the will of the Holy God, by asking God to do His will in your life and your spheres of influence you are inviting God to be in total control; you are offering yourself up to be totally surrendered to Him and His will. As a Christian, it should be our ultimate goal and greatest desire to always and completely yearn for the will of God in our lives and the world around us. But, our fallen nature cries out for our will to be done. This is why we should ask, no, beg God that His will be done in earth and in our own lives, as it is in heaven. This is the ultimate act of our submission to God – The submission of our nature and our wills to that of the holy and righteous God. Before you answer too quickly I want to caution you to not make this request of God lightly because if you ask this of God, you should expect that things are going to change for you, and some of those changes will likely be painful, at least in the short-term. As I prepared for this message, I started to ask God for His will to be done in my life and my spheres of influence. It did not take long before I was convicted of a multitude of things I needed to change in my life; a few of these things include being convicted to reach out to a brother in Christ to make peace because we vastly disagree on many topics. Controlling my frustration and my tongue better both at home and at work. Treating my wife differently than I had been. And more. Have I successfully accomplished all these things? No not yet, I am continuing to work on them. However, I believe that they may never have even come to my attention if I had not asked God to help me better understand total submission to Him and His will. Are you ready and willing to surrender your life completely to the authority and control of God?

Supplication:

The outline for prayer that Jesus give us now turns from Adoration to Supplication. Supplication is a fancy word for asking for something. Jesus says in Verse 11: "Give us this day our daily bread." If we look the total population of the United States (~329.5 million people) there are very few Americans who are so poor that they must rely solely on God to provide food and/or physically feed them every single day of their lives. My guess is that most of you here do not wait on God to physically feed you each day. But this verse is not just about physical food; it is also about other needs and desires we may have, and most importantly, it is about spiritual needs and spiritual food. It is not a sin for you to pray and ask God for the things you want and desire, He already knows what they are anyway. However, it is important to remember that your desire for a new job, a bigger house, a new car, or any other physical blessing may or may not be in line with God's will and therefore the answer to those prayers may be NO. Just because you ask for the things you desire does not mean that God will give them to you. You may find out later in life that what you asked for would have turned out to be really bad for you and that not getting it was actually a blessing from God. Therefore, instead of focusing your requests of God on your selfish desires I want to encourage you to focus instead on your spiritual needs and desires. You may be thinking to yourself what does he mean by my spiritual needs and desires? To answer that, let me ask you this:

When was the last time you prayed begging God:

- For true repentance from a habitual sin
- To live your life daily, in total surrender to God's will
- To find true and total joy in Jesus each day
- To daily reflect Jesus in everything you say and do
- For a deeper understanding of the Scriptures during your quiet times
- For a greater desire to share your faith everywhere you go
- For a deeper love of the people you encounter each day

These are just a few examples of some of your spiritual needs, and if you pray for these God will answer, you may not like the answer, the answer may be painful in the short-term, and you will likely be changed by the answer, but in the end you will be more like Jesus... and that my friend, is the goal.

Yet, there is still an even deeper meaning behind these seven simple words. Yes, you should most definitely pray for God to meet you spiritual needs, but what many of us fail to realize is that God has already provided a massive spiritual banquet for each of us. He has laid this banquet out before us and invited us to eat freely from this spiritual banquet table, yet many of us walk around spiritually starving every day of our lives. How can we learn to feast at this grand table? God has provided us with all the silverware (tools) we need to spiritually feed ourselves until we are full, yet most of us are too lazy to use these tools, or in some cases to even learn to use these tools so that we may feed ourselves from this table. If you have spent any time at all at this church, you have heard Pastor Kevin talk about, and teach you about these tools. We are even discussing one of these tools today... Yes, prayer is one of the tools. If you want to feast at this table each day you will need to implement significant prayer time into your daily life. Not just reciting a laundry list of hopes and desires, but real, deep, intimate prayer. Prayer where you ask God to make changes in your life, where you pray for the things that are important to God, not you, and where you intercede on behalf of a brother or sister in Christ or a lost soul. When was the last time you prayed, really prayed not just recited a list of things you want from God? When was the last time your prayer time lasted for more than: 5 minutes? ½ hour? 1 hour? 5 hours? Without prayer you can never be fully spiritually satiated.

But wait... There is more!

Another piece of silverware God has given us to eat from the spiritual banquet table is His Holy Word – the Bible. But in order to feast on the spiritual bounty of the Bible we must first learn to diligently study the Bible. **NOTICE:** I said study. We must do more than read the Bible like a novel. We must dig into the rich depths of the Bible in order to truly take part in the feast of spiritual blessing that God has laid before us.

While simply reading the Bible like a novel is a great appetizer, it is not the main course of the meal. To be a disciple of Jesus you must master the discipline of Bible study. Over the past several years since Kristen and I started attending Forge Church I have listened to Pastor Kevin preach hours upon hours of sermons on how to study the Bible. He has showed each of us all the tools and he has even explained in great detail how to use these tools. Those of us who have sat under his teaching for years have no excuse, we have the silverware required to feast deeply from the banquet table of spiritual blessing. Yet, how many of you can you name any of the tools Pastor Kevin has taught us to use?

As a refresher, here are a few of the tools Pastor Kevin talks about frequently:

- Research the background and context of every passage before you read it
- Do not study the Bible through the eyes of a 21st century American, study the Bible through the eyes of a 1st century Jew
- Research the cultural and political circumstances at the time the passage was written
- Research the author and their history and background
- Do word studies
- Use textual criticism
- Read commentaries and books on passages from faithful authors to gain deeper insights and different perspectives on a passage
- Listen to a variety of faithful pastors preach on the same passage
- Listen to the audio Bible whenever you can
- Read books on Christian living by faithful authors

The final piece of silverware God has given us to use in feasting from the spiritual banquet table is Community. God designed humans to be social beings. We are never good in isolation. But, we need other faithful brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage us, hold us accountable, challenge us, and help us grow. It is important for our spiritual well-being to that we regularly take part in activities such as:

- Life groups
- Group Bible Studies
- Accountability relationships with a brother in Christ (if you are male) or a sister in Christ (if you are female)
- Reaching out to people in the church that you have not seen in a while to see if they are ok or if they need anything
- Social hangouts with other people from the church. These can be as simple as inviting someone out to lunch after service, having a few people over for a bonfire, or doing some kind of activity with others from the church. It is the duty and responsibility of each one of you to initiate these events regularly.

As you can see, there is an awful lot packed into praying for your daily bread and feasting from the spiritual banquet table provided by God. It is my hope and prayer that each of you do adopt a daily habit of praying for your daily spiritual bread and that in so doing you learn to feast deeply for the grand banquet table of spiritual sustenance that God has laid before you. As 21st century American Christians we have no excuses. Never before in history has so much information been available and accessible to every single person. Please brothers and sisters, I implore you to start praying for your spiritual needs and a growing desire to feast from the banquet of spiritual food that has been laid out and is waiting for you.

Forgiveness:

After two verses on adoration and one on supplication and using only 37 English words, we have reached the halfway point of this prayer outline, but Jesus still has much to teach us as He now moves on to forgiveness. Jesus says: “And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Wait a minute, you might say, what is this debt thing? And what does it have to do with forgiveness? and the way I memorized this passage or in my Bible the words trespasses or sins are used, which is the right word?

My dear friends, I hope that you have been listening as Pastor Kevin over the last couple years, because he has already given us the answer to that question on several occasions. He has taught us many times in many different sermons, that our modern English translations of the original Greek or Hebrew can sometimes be translated a bit differently depending on who the translator was. When these translation differences occur it is our individual responsibility as students of the Bible to seek out the best translation of the Greek or Hebrew word. We know that this activity is called a word study. Pastor Kevin has demonstrated how to do a word study numerous times over the past several years, but how about we walk through a little word study on the word which is translated by the KJV as debt and see if we can uncover why this word was chosen over one of the other words and which one seems to be the best word to use based on the original Greek. Are you with me?

As we begin, I want all of you to know that I prepared this word study using nothing more than a computer, a web browser, and Google. You do not need an expansive library, any fancy tools, a seminary degree, or the title of pastor to do a word study, everything you need is readily available for free on the internet.

Let's begin:

The first step is that we need to look up the Greek word for debt. When we look at the original Greek word for debt we find that word is:

ὀφειλήματα Greek word (Of-i'-lay-mah) which literally means “that which is owed, a debt”. By looking at Strong's online concordance, we also learn that ὀφειλήματα is the word used in Matt 6:12. As we read the information on this word in the concordance we learn that the word Of-i'-lay-mah has both the meaning of outstanding financial obligations, as well as non-financial obligations.

We must then ask ourselves, what kind of debt is a non-financial obligation?

Consider the following phrases we often use in every day language:

“I owe you a debt of gratitude” in other words I am obligated to be grateful to you for something you said or did.

Or “I am indebted to you for your kindness to me” in other words you were so kind to me that I feel an obligation to repay you in some manner.

A final example is that when you sin against God or another person you owe them an apology, repentance, possibly even restitution – You have a sin debt.

You say: “Ah Ha!!! Gregg, you weren't listening when Pastor Kevin told us that If, I have repented of my sins and believe in my heart (Romans 10:9) that I am forgiven of my sins and saved to eternity in heaven with Jesus. That the righteousness of Jesus is imputed to me and that the Bible teaches me that if I have saving faith that I also I have eternal security. Therefore, why would I need to seek forgiveness of a sin debt if all my sins, past, present, and future have already been forgiven?” : **Let's see you get out of this one!**

Brothers and sisters, I was listening and I fully agree with that teaching. The Bible is not in contradiction with itself here, rather we need to understand there are two very different kinds of forgiveness that a true believer in Jesus needs in their lives:

The first kind of forgiveness is positional forgiveness. This type of forgiveness happens when you come to saving faith. This is the forgiveness that is imputed to you by the perfection of Jesus and His death on the cross. It is positional forgiveness that moves you from death to life and once you have received positional forgiveness you cannot lose it and it cannot be taken away, given away, or lost. This is the forgiveness that saves you.

But, there is a second kind of forgiveness. This second kind of forgiveness cannot save you from an eternity in hell, but it is essential to your relationship with God, and your brothers and sisters in Christ. This type of forgiveness is called relational forgiveness. We all experience the giving and receiving of this type of forgiveness throughout our lives. This type of forgiveness does not bring eternal life; instead, this type of forgiveness restores damaged relationships. . If I sin against you, our relationship is damaged and will remain damaged until I humble myself, seek your forgiveness, and ask you to restore our relationship. This is also true of our relationship with God. When we sin, and we all do it every day, that sin damages our intimate relationship with God. We now have a sin debt that while that debt does not impact our position with God, we are still saved, it does deeply impact our relationship with God. In order to restore that relationship, we must humble ourselves and seek forgiveness for the sin debt we owe to God in order to restore our damaged relationship. Let me be perfectly clear here. We never lost eternal life or the imputed righteousness of Jesus, but we did damage our relationship with God and needed to repair it. Anyone who is married or even been in any kind of personal relationship understands the need for relational forgiveness. Parents need to give and receive this forgiveness to their children; husbands and wives need to practice this with each other; even friends, co-workers, and brothers and sisters in Christ will need to practice relational forgiveness. By confessing your sins to God and asking for His forgiveness we Christians are doing our part to restore our broken relationship with God. Since this prayer outline was given to Christians, i.e. the disciples, it is clear that Jesus was speaking of relational forgiveness here, and not positional forgiveness.

However, we cannot stop there. Yes, our relationship with God is of the utmost importance, but second to that relationship is our relationship with others. This is where the second half of this verse comes in “as we forgive our debtors”

In the first half of this verse we read: “Forgive us our debts...” We have come to understand that means we need to seek forgiveness to restore our relationship with God, but the verse takes this forgiveness thing to a whole new level by adding “...as we forgive our debtors”. Stop and think about that for a moment these five simple words really are the proverbial throat punch of the verse when we consider what they really mean. The first four words are the easy part. It is very easy for true believers to ask a loving God to forgive our sin debt. It is a little harder to ask a brother or sister in Christ to forgive our sin debt to them. It can be a bit difficult to ask an unbeliever to forgive our sin debt to them, but where this gets real hard is where this second half of the verse rubs up against our pride. “...as we forgive our debtors” In grammatical terms, these five words are called a modifier or a modifying phrase. This means that they cannot be fully understood until we know what word or phrase they are modifying. In this case they are modifying the first four words of the verse. When read together, this verse reads: “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” In other words, you are asking God to forgive you of your sin debt and restore your relationship to Him **in the same manner** that you forgive the sin debts that others owe you and restore your relationship with them. **OUCH!** You cannot expect God to forgive your sin debt to Him if you are unwilling to forgive the sin debt that your brother or sister owes you. If you hold onto anger or bitterness against another person you have no business asking God to restore your relationship with Him. You must first release the debts others owe you and be willing to restore your relationships with them, before you can approach God and ask him to forgive your debt and restore your relationship with him. Are you willing to swallow your pride and forgive those who have sinned against you, even if they do not ask for forgiveness, in order that your relationship with God can be restored? Please know that I do understand, there may be some special situations where a restoration of the human relationship is not

possible, but forgiveness is a choice – not a feeling. You can still choose to forgive a person of a sin debt even if you need to keep them out of your life for safety or sanity reasons. Clearly, God takes this forgiveness thing serious, do you?

Protection:

Following a tough teaching on forgiveness Jesus moves on in his outline for prayer to an area that I believe is often overlooked by Christians. As Christians, we are really good at the asking God for the things we think we need... i.e. want. Some of us do a fair job at exalting and honoring God when we put out mind to it. A few of us may even be good at confessing our sins and restoring our relationships, but in all my years as a Christian and in the many faithful American churches I have attended over my life, I have only rarely heard any brother or sister in Christ pray for protection.

You might ask: Where do you get this protection stuff from? the passage says: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil” What’s that got to do with protection? The simple answer to that question is that Jesus is teaching his disciples to pray that they will not face temptation. But, that raises the question of whether or not God can or will tempt us. For a full and detailed answer to that question I am going to point you to the sermon mini-series that Pastor Kevin preached on Matthew 4:1-11, these excellent sermons on the temptation of Jesus in the Wilderness are all available online for your review. I encourage you to watch those sermons so that you can more deeply wrestle with that question, but for those that may have missed that series here are the cliff notes of that series.

The word translated in our English Bible as temptation is the Greek word πειρασμός, peirasmos (pi-raz-mos) it means “a trial, a proving, or a test”. When we understand what this word means it becomes clear that God does not tempt us to sin, but rather that He can and often will allow believers to be tested. The most famous example of this is the entirety of the book of Job. If you have never studied the book of Job, I recommend you spend some quality time there. It is an amazing book that proclaims God’s sovereignty, authority, majesty, and holiness. Maybe we can get Pastor Kevin to tackle Job when we finish Matthew... But, I digress.

Once we understand that the best translation of this word is test rather than tempt, it becomes obvious, that this passage is a petition to God for protection from a time of testing. We certainly can and should continue to ask, perhaps even beg God to remove the testing and protect us from further testing, if that be His will, but whether He does so or not, we must remain faithful throughout our time of testing. Further, when we do face testing, we most certainly should ask God for the strength to endure and prevail over the test. But what does Jesus mean when he add the phrase “...but deliver us from evil”. Is He implying that the testing that God allows is somehow evil?

An examination of this Scripture in many of the older manuscripts show this phrase to read “But deliver us from the evil one”. Indicating, that what we are really asking is for God to protect us from Satan himself. Many of the modern translations omit the word “One”, this causes issues for some believers, yet in reality is should not. Why? To understand, we must go back to our Bible study tools and reacquaint ourselves with our old friend the word study.

The Greek word used here is the Greek word πονηρός Poneros (Pon-ay-ros’), the meaning of this word is the personification of evil as opposed to some nameless force of evil. When the Greek pronoun Ho is added to the word Poneros (Pon-ay-ros’) as it is in many of the ancient manuscripts, the pronoun makes it clear that we are talking about an evil being or person. ***In other words, what we are discussing is not the dark side of the force, Luke.*** As a result, the best translation of Poneros (Pon-ay-ros’), would be “Evil One” and not simply evil. We know from reading Scripture that the title Evil One primarily applies to Satan. When we understand this we

understand that what Jesus is teaching in this verse is that not only is it a good idea to pray for protection, but that we should specifically pray for protection from Satan and his attacks.

The late R.C Sproul sums up the entirety of verse 13 nicely when he says: “Jesus therefore shows us that we should pray for protection against Satan. We may thus pray: “Lord, please do not let me be exposed to a time of testing in which I will face the full fury of the Devil’s assault. Protect me from the enemy and deliver me from his hands.””

Doxology:

In some translations of the Bible, including the KJV that we are looking at today, the disciples prayer outline that Jesus gives us ends with the phrase: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen” Why is that phrase in some Bibles and not others? To answer this question we need to pull another tool out of our hermeneutical toolbox. We have already used our Word Study tool several times in the study of this passage, but now we put that tool back in the toolbox and pull out the tool of Textual Criticism.

For those who do not know or remember what Textual Criticism is, here is a very brief definition. Textual Criticism is the study of the ancient copies of the Biblical manuscripts that we have available to us today to determine what the most probable wording of a section of Scripture most likely said in the original writings. You can find a very detailed discussion of textual criticism and how to use it on the Gotquestions.org website. Just type Textual Criticism in the search box and you will get more information that you may need.

When we look at the ancient manuscripts we find that some of the early manuscripts contain this phrase, while others do not. Since there is not a 100% agreement among the ancient texts, we cannot know for certain if these words were actually spoken by Jesus during His sermon. As a result, there has long been disagreement amongst Biblical scholars over the centuries as to whether or not these words were the words of Jesus, if they were added by the gospel writer(s), or added by some scribe at a later date. The translators of the KJV felt that there was enough evidence to support the inclusion of these words in the text, while many of the more modern translations like the CSB, NIV, and NASB do not feel there is enough evidence to include them. So what is the right answer? Should this phrase be in the Bible or not?

What we do know for certain about the phrase: “For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen” is that in literary terms, it is what is called a doxology. So what exactly is a doxology? Simply defined a doxology is a short, hymn-like phrase or verse that exalts, praises, and brings glory to God. We also know from our study of 1st century Jewish history and culture, that the use of a doxology after a prayer, in public and private worship, or at the end of a letter was a very common practice. Here are just a few examples of other doxologies found in the Bible:

- Psalm 41:13 - Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen.
- Psalm 57:5 - Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.
- Isaiah 6:3 - Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.
- Romans 16:27 - To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen
- Ephesians 3:20-21 - Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen
- 2 Peter 3:18 - Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Since the use of our textual criticism tool still does not give us a definitive answer as to whether this doxology should be considered Scripture or not how do we then decide whether this should be in the Bible or not? If textual criticism does not give us a clear answer, the next thing we must then do is to look at what the line of

text itself actually says: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen” As we look at the words of this doxology we need to ask is there anything in this line of text that goes against God’s character, contradicts other verified portions of Scripture, or in any other way brings confusion or disclarity to the Bible or its teachings? In this case, the answer is no. This doxology actually ascribes ownership of creation, power, and glory to God. Nothing in this phrase is inconsistent or unclear and it does not disagree with anything else we know to be true in the Bible. As a result, just like the great Biblical scholars before us, we can neither, prove or disprove that this phrase should be a part of the Biblical text, but we have also learned that it does not disagree with or violate Scripture either. So the question of should this phrase be included as it is in the KJV or excluded as it is in most modern translations? Still remains. To help us come to an answer on this question, there is one more test that we can and should subject this phrase to. That is the test of literary agreement with the preceding text. What does this mean? Simply put, since all of our other textual criticism tests were inconclusive, we now need to compare the tone, style, and syntax of this phrase with the rest of the passage. Verses 9 through 13A, are instructive in nature and given the context of the passage it is clear that these words are Jesus instructing his disciples on how to pray. No faithful Biblical scholar I was able to find disagrees with that statement. However, verse 13B has a completely different tone, style, and syntax from verse 9-13A. When you consider that the tone, style, and syntax of the doxology differs so greatly from the instructive teaching of Jesus in the rest of the passage, and the fact that this phrase does not appear in most of the earliest manuscripts, the logical conclusion we must then draw is that this phrase: “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen” is most likely an addition made by a scribe who thought the prayer needed a prettier ending. Therefore, the best treatment for this phrase is to do exactly what most modern translations do and that is to either leave it in the text, but to put brackets around it and add a footnote explaining that the text is not found in the earliest manuscripts or simply leave it out of the text and add a footnote that this phrase is not found in all the earliest manuscripts.

Conclusion:

This has been a very teaching heavy message. In many ways it was a very difficult message to write. However, it is my hope that you now have a new appreciation and understanding of the disciple’s prayer and how it should be used to guide your prayers. Please brother and sister, do not go away from here today unchanged. If you spend your prayer time truly bringing praise and adoration to God, if you truly pray for your spiritual needs and that your spiritual desires would grow to consume you, that you pray that your sin debt be removed and your relationship with God be restored while practicing true forgiveness of the sin debts owed to you; I believe that you will find a new richness in your prayer life. However, I also believe that when you pray like Jesus teaches, that you will find it absolutely necessary to pray for protection from testing and protection from the evil one. Why do I believe this? Because Satan loves when you pray selfish prayers, he loves when you focus your prayer time on your earthly wants, desires, comforts, and when you only give lip service to forgiveness to show off your spiritual pride. But, when you pray as Jesus taught us here, your prayers become powerful. Your prayers appeal to the very nature and authority of God. Your prayers begin to align with God as your will is diminished and His will is exalted. When this happens, Satan will take notice and Satan will seek to derail your prayers, perhaps even going so far as to petition God to test you... and for that my friends, you will need divine protection. I pray that this message has changed you. Not just piqued your interest for a short period, but really challenged you to change how you pray; to begin to pray selfless prayers, prayers that God desires to hear, prayers that are a sweet aroma to God, and prayers that change you, your relationship with God, your family, your church, and your world.