DELIVER US FROM EVIL
(Matthew 6:13; Ephesians 6:10-18)

INTRODUCTION

We will finish our series of sermons on the Lord’s Prayer today. I hope that these messages have encouraged you to use the Lord’s Prayer as a model to direct your daily praying. It does not give us everything we should pray about, but it gives us the important things that we don’t want to overlook when we pray. It is the prayer that the Lord taught us to pray.

This morning we will look at the last part of the 6th petition, “deliver us from evil.” Some see verse 13 as one petition with “lead us not into temptation” as saying it as a negative (lead not) and this phrase “deliver us from evil” as the positive way of saying the same thing. I can go with this. But let’s focus on the last part, “deliver us from evil.”

David Wells in his recent book (“Above All Earthly Pow’rs”) explains the broad changes that have been taking place in our culture due to post-modern thinking, multi-culturalism, and religious pluralism. He says that one thing happened as a results of the 9/11 attack on the world trade center, the word ‘evil’ came back into our vocabulary. Saying something was “evil” was not politically correct before 9/11. Now many believe in the reality of evil, especially when thinking of what radical Islamic terrorists have done to 1,000s of innocent people just because they do not believe as they do. Most do not hesitate to call it evil.

Certainly one application of this prayer, “deliver us from evil” is a prayer of protection from those who would do us harm.

Now you may notice that some contemporary translations of the Bible read, “deliver us from the evil one.” The original text has an article ‘the’ in front of evil, which would make it translate “the evil one or thing.” However you take it both are tied together. Who is the source of all evil? It is Satan. Satan uses our flesh to lead us into doing evil and he uses the forces or godless values of the world to lead people into doing evil. So, all types of evil are somehow ultimately connected to the Evil One or Satan.

Now many today do not believe that Satan is a real being. They see him as a symbol of evil. According to George Barna, the Christian research expert, he says, “The majority of American Christians do not believe that Satan is a real being or that the Holy Spirit is a living entity. Nearly six out of ten Christians either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed with the statement that Satan "is not a living being but is a symbol of evil."
But I believe that Satan is a real being. Why? -- Because Jesus confronted a real being in his temptation as recorded in Matthew’s gospel. Because the Bible warns us that Satan is real and we need to be alert. Paul warns us about the wiles of the Devil (Ephesians 6:10). Peter warns us about the Devil seeking someone to devour (I Peter 5:8). John says that the “that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” (I John 5:19). Jesus here teaches us to pray, “Deliver us from the Evil One.” Deliver us from the wiles of Satan.

Although I believe that Satan is the ultimate source of evil, we cannot use the devil as an excuse when we fall into evil. We can’t blame the devil for our sins. How many of you remember the comedian Flip Wilson and his often quoted saying? “The devil made me do it.” No, the devil does not make you do anything. You do evil because of you give in to the temptations before you whether they are of the devil, or of your flesh, or of the world. But the devil is real and we are to know how to deal with him.

Elmer Towns in his book, “Praying the Lord’s Prayer” organizes the Biblical teaching about how to withstand the attacks of Satan around four principles. I want to share them with you with my own commentary.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RESPECT

First we need to use the principle of RESPECT. We need to respect the power of Satan as we would respect a poisonous snake. To respect the power of Satan is not to give him honor or glory, but to steer clear of him as you would a ravenous lion or a poisonous snake that you know is lurking in the woods. This principle is an application of Jude 9

**Jude 1:9 NIV**  But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Jude is referring to a Jewish tradition of his day which is not recorded in the Bible. Moses’ death is recorded. He died in Moab and God buried him in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. If his grave was marked, probably it would have been a site where Israel would make pilgrimages and fall into false worship, since Moses was the greatest leader of the nation up until David.

The principle is that Michael knew the power of Satan and his high ranking status among the angels. He didn’t confront him directly but said, “The Lord rebuke you!” Satan is crafty, and we are not to seek to take him on toe to toe. I have been around some Christians who seem to relish the thought of doing battle with Satan. Not I.
On the other hand we do not have to fear Satan because the Bible says that “greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” Martin Luther liked to refer to Satan as a ‘chained dog.’ He is like a mad dog but he is chained. He cannot get to you apart from the owner’s will. The owner of Satan is God. Satan is a tool in God’s hands. God will use Satan for his end and He will dispose of Satan in the end! Satan is like a chained dog. He seeks to frighten you, but cannot get to you because of your faith in his master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, we are to have a healthy respect for the power and craftiness of Satan, and not be overconfident in our ability to do battle with him and certainly not go seeking to do battle with him.

THE PRINCIPLE OF REMOVAL

Next there is the principle of removal.

A little boy met his father at the front door and announced to the proud dad, "I beat a snake today..."

The father was surprised at his son’s boldness, and that he knew how to rid the yard of snakes. So he asked his son, "Did you beat the snake with a stick or a rock?"

"I beat him running..." the lad explained.

The better part of wisdom is to remove ourselves from evil as the first line of defense in dealing with the Devil.

The Scriptures give us warrant for this

1 Timothy 6:11 NIV But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

We are to flee evil, not pursue it. As we concluded our study in the book of Romans last Wednesday, verse 16:19

but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent [or simple] about what is evil

We need to focus on the good, not the evil that is all around us. It is like the Timothy passage, we need to focus on “righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.”

John tells us that the whole world lies under the influence or control of the Evil One. (I John 5:19). If we seek to root out all evil that we see, it would consume our time and we will be totally frustrated because Satan’s influence is
worldwide. If we focus on doing good and fleeing evil, then we will be more effective for the Lord.

We need to beat the snake by running from him! We need to be wise about what is good, and simple about what is evil.

**THE PRINCIPLE OF RESISTANCE**

Now we come to the principle of resistance. This is the principle taught both by Peter and James. First James

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

*1 Peter 5:8-9 NIV*  Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (9) Resist him, standing firm in the faith.

Satan is looking for someone to devour! He is not seeking to devour you physically as a literal lion would. It is not as if he would jump out from behind a tree to devour you like a lion. He is seeking to devour your faith and your steadfastness in following the Lord. He will come to you as an “angel of light” as Paul says and seek to lead you astray by false teaching. Or he will come to you through the temptations of your flesh and try to convince you that it is alright to live in sin. Or he will come to you through convincing you that the world’s value are more important than God’s value. Satan is not seeking to devour you physically, but he is seeking to devour you spiritually. And he will not appear to you personally, but he will influence your thoughts and value commitments.

Our responsibility is to resist these accusations and these temptations, by submitting ourselves to God and saying no to these attacks of the devil. James says, “submit yourselves to God and resist the devil.” Peter says, “Casting all your cares upon God for He cares for you and be sober and alert and resist the devil.”

**PRINCIPLE OF READINESS**

Finally we come to the principle of readiness. How can we prepare ourselves to resist the devil, to avoid his poisonous attack? Paul gives us a lengthy description of how to be ready and prepared for whatever the devil throws at you. You are to put on the whole armour of God.

*Ephesians 6:10-18 NIV*  Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (11) Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (14) Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, (15) and with your feet fitted with the readiness
that comes from the gospel of peace. (16) In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (17) Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. (18) And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

The belt of truth. This was the soldier’s belt that held all of his armor in place. It was like what we called a “pistol belt” when I was in the army. It is the truth that holds all our weapons in place. Since Satan depends on deception to maintain his power we must daily immerse ourselves with God’s truth.

The breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate protected the vital organs (heart, lungs, and kidneys). It is righteousness that protects us in those vital areas in our relationship with God. That righteousness is the righteousness of Christ that God has given us as a free gift. This righteousness is perfect. Each day we are to cloth ourselves in Christ’s righteousness to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Feet fitted with shoes of the Gospel of peace. Terrain was rocky in the ancient world, requiring sturdy, protective footwear. We must be convinced of the power of the Gospel and be willing to take it to the lost.

The shield of faith. The Roman soldiers shield was of sufficient size that he could take shelter behind it, from the arrows of the enemy. In order to quench the fiery darts of Satan’s temptations we believe God’s word and truth. Faith is the victory.

The helmet of salvation. It is the knowledge that we are saved that provides protection from the Satan’s two edged sword of discouragement and doubt. As I said, Satan attacks us through our minds. To have assurance that we have eternal life protects us from the doubt and discouragement Satan wants to throw at us.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. God’s word is not only an offensive weapon; it also is a defensive weapon. We are to know how to use the Word of God as Jesus did when He was tempted by Satan. Focus on the promises of God and stand against the attacks of Satan with these promises.

CONCLUSION

Finally, as we are standing against the wiles of the devil being clothed with and equipped by the whole armor of God, we are to pray. We are to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” And one special prayer we are to pray is the Lord’s Prayer and especially the last part of it, “Deliver us from the Evil One.”
Satan is real. He has a vast spiritual domain of evil agents. He controls the world as John says. He will not come at you with a frontal attack but will subtlety work through your thought patterns and entice you through your flesh. As we think about the spiritual battle going on throughout the whole world, we are to realize that there are spiritual realities we don’t know much about, but we can be certain that the archenemy of God and his plan of redemption is directing all these battles. And we are to exercise the principles of Respect, Removal, of Resistance, and Readiness as we stand against Satan and his plans of destruction.

Jesus is well aware of the Evil One’s attacks on us. In his high priestly prayer for us as recorded in John 17 he prays to the Father: My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. John 17:15. Jesus’ prayer will be answered. He will give us the victory.

Although Satan is God’s archenemy today, he is a defeated enemy. Jesus has defeated him on the cross. Even though Satan is still allowed access to God’s people on earth Paul promised the Romans “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. (16:20) So we know that Satan’s days are numbered. One day he will be cast into the lake of fire forever and ever (Rev 20:10). But until that day, he will continue to seek to destroy the work of God so we are to resist the devil by putting on the whole armor of God each day and pray, “deliver us from the Evil One” trusting in the captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Amen? Amen!