



# CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613

(319) 277-0924

[INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](mailto:INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)

[WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG](http://WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG)

## Prayer is Protective, Part 1

### Matthew 6:9-13

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

---

It has been a great joy and encouragement for me to focus on prayer at the beginning of this year, and it has stirred and sort of strengthened my prayer life, and I hope it has done the same for you. That would be the purpose for focusing on prayer like this: to deepen our prayer life and to encourage each other in it.

We've been looking at these specific things that Jesus taught us about prayer, and that God has taught us about prayer in His Word. And as we've looked through this sample prayer, we've seen that prayer is personal in the sense that God didn't intend for us to first and foremost do public prayer, but first to learn how to talk to Him in private, in the secret place, is what Jesus said, from our authentic selves to Him, to have a private communication with God.

And He has told us that God already knows what we're going to say and what we need before we even ask. So we should bring our honest, vulnerable selves before Him. We don't need to put on airs when we talk with the Lord. We don't need to be demonstrative in our prayers. We can just be our authentic selves, talking with Him as we would a friend.

We've also seen that prayer has great potential because we are inviting the Kingdom of God, and we're inviting it to come here on the earth as it is in Heaven. And we're talking to a great King who's the ruler of all that is, of a Kingdom that has no end.

And there's great power in Him. He alone holds all authority in Heaven and on earth, and He has invited us to come to Him in prayer and talk with Him. And we looked at the fact that God has told us that through our prayers sometimes His mind can be changed, and we can have an effect on the earth, and it can have an effect on our lives. So there's great potential in prayer.

We looked at the example of Elijah, who prayed that it wouldn't rain, and his prayers were answered to even affect the weather. We've also looked at the fact that prayer is provisional, that through our prayers we can ask for what we need, and God Himself will provide for us along the way.

As a matter of fact, He has promised to provide for those who seek Him diligently. If you seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, the Bible says He'll meet every need you have. And He invited us to pray for our daily needs: give us this day our daily bread. And that bread is the sustenance for life, not just for physical life, but spiritual nourishment and emotional needs that we have that need to be met.

So God, give us what we need each day for life to accomplish what You've put us here to accomplish. It's provisional, it has potential, it's personal.

And we looked last week at the fact that prayer should have a penitent aspect to it, which means it should be a sense of approaching a holy God that we've sung about with a heart that understands that sometimes we do things that are wrong before Him. And we should come before Him with remorse when we violated His ways, and we should say, forgive us our sins.

As we forgive others, we should keep a small record. Love keeps no record of wrongs, the Bible says. We shouldn't keep accounts with other people, for as we keep accounts with other people, God will keep accounts with us. But as we forgive others, God will forgive us, and we can stay in the flow of grace if we're honest about our sinfulness before the Lord.

And finally today, in this last phrase of His sample prayer, Jesus is giving us an example of how prayer can be proactively protective. Proactively protective. When you pray, He said, pray like this: lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Keep us from temptation and deliver us from evil.

This part of Jesus' prayer is pointing at two enemies of the God-inspired, God-infused, God-enriched life that He wants for us. Jesus came that we might have life and have it to the full. But there are enemies of this full and rich spiritual life, and Jesus is highlighting two of them here.

One is the presence and power of sin, which we've already acknowledged, and then also the presence and power of evil. Some versions say the evil one, which means the presence and power of Satan. Both of these two forces in the world collaborate to get people away from God, away from the life-giving flow of the Spirit of God in the world. They are allies as enemies against human beings: sin and Satan.

Let's look first at sin. We don't like to talk about it in our world. In our culture, it's a somewhat vulnerable topic. The Bible says that we have a propensity in our hearts to do what's wrong before God. It's been there from the very first human beings forward.

We are born into it. The Bible says we are born with a nature that does not necessarily want to please the Almighty. The Bible says there is no one who seeks God in and of their own heart, no one who is righteous, no, not one. We have a bent in our hearts that pulls us away from God and towards, we might say, destructive things.

It's really amazing when you think about it, the human capacity to self-destruct or do things that hurt ourselves. The Bible says the presence of sin came to us through one man. It's found in the book of Romans.

Paul wrote this: sin entered, this propensity to do what's wrong, and then even the behaviors that are wrong entered the world through one man. And then through this one man, death, the consequence of sin, slow separation from the life of God, or sometimes quick separation from the life of God, came to all of us.

And so now all have sinned and fall short of God's intent for our lives. And so we have this challenge that we deal with, the presence of sin in our lives.

And how does it work in us? James wrote about it in our lesson for today. He said each person is tempted to do what's wrong when they are lured and enticed by their own desire, James said. This does not come from God. God never tempts anyone, nor is He Himself tempted to do what's wrong.

But each person is tempted when they are lured or enticed by their own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin. And then sin, because it's self-destructive, when it's fully grown brings forth death.

Sin, the presence of sin, is explained by the presence of death in our world, and death is all around us.

Now let's talk about how this sinfulness works. Let's say, for example, you want to do what's right as you start the new year. We have New Year's resolutions, and many of us probably in this room said, hey, I'm going to get a little healthier this year.

I'm going to make choices that bring more life to my body, my soul, and my spirit. I try to do this consistently. Say, God, I want to live into the fullness of life that you have for me. And so I make a commitment to eat right, to get the rest that I need, to feed my spirit and my soul with the right things.

But inevitably something happens, and a temptation comes my way. My wife happens to be a very good cook, and sometimes around the holidays she brings together different special sweet treats. And I enjoy those sweet treats.

Especially when someone in our family puts together chocolate-covered peanut butter balls. They have that powdered sugar inside of them with just that little crunch of peanut butter in them, and then they're covered. And when they're covered with dark, smooth chocolate, I mean, who can resist these things?

And so I walk into a room and there sit the peanut butter balls, and something happens inside of me. I have this desire to want to choose life. And so I start to think about and see, and I'm tempted by my desire with those peanut butter balls. And I think to myself, well, one can't hurt that much.

And so I take one, and it tastes pretty good. And then I start to think, well, maybe two. That first one was so good.

And you know what happens deep inside of me? There are two motors running. One of them—it's like two fishing motors pulling in the deep waters inside of me. One of them's running this way, saying, Tim, that's enough. One was good. Remember what you're trying to do? The other one says, oh, just one more. You could handle one more.

And they pull in opposite directions. And what happens inside of me is this battle of powers within me. And what's going on inside of here is a decision that I'm going to make of which engine to fuel, which one to give the most gas to, which one I'm going to put the pedal on.

And if I put the pedal on the second peanut butter ball, it might taste good enough that I want a third. And what happens is the engine that we fuel the most starts to get stronger and more powerful, and the accelerator, as we push it down, starts to pick up speed in a certain direction. And then it gets harder and harder to turn.

This is the power of sin. This is how we can be led astray by our own desires, taking us down a pathway that's not good for us.

Now peanut butter balls are just a little sin against our bodies, but there's more harsh things in the world. I recently heard the story of a pastor who had a young man in his congregation who was a really good preacher, and so he would invite him to come preach now and then.

And every time he met with him on Sunday morning, before the service would begin, he could smell the smell of cigarettes coming off this young man. For a number of weeks he didn't say anything to him about it. But then eventually he said, you know, every time we meet together—he wasn't being condemning or critical of the man—he said, I just notice every time we meet together you smell like cigarettes. Do you happen to be a smoker?

And the young man said, yes, I am. He said, that's my vice. I got to smoking early on in my life, and it just took hold of me. And I just can't seem to get rid of this habit of smoking, he said. I'd like to get rid of it, but it just sort of has me.

And the pastor said to him, you know, I know sin can be powerful. It's just a sin against your body. But he said, I want you to think about something. Your potential as a preacher in advancing the Kingdom of God is huge, he said. Wouldn't it be sad if just some little white wrapped piece of tobacco caused you not to fill your full potential before God as a preacher?

And this man started to think differently about his sin.

When my mother was younger—she happens to be here today—her parents taught her to smoke with dignity, you know, before we knew it was really wrong. And I've heard her give her testimony after she became a Christian. And she knew inside of her that smoking wasn't right.

She started to have this dialogue with God, and she tried to convince the Lord that maybe, just maybe, she could be one of those smoking Christians. And so she asked the Lord about this. And eventually the Lord brought her out of that temptation.

Friends, the presence of sin is very real. It's in our hearts, and the temptation to sin is all around us.

Sure, we can talk about cigarettes and chocolate peanut butter balls, friends, but there is all kinds of sin. Sins of commission and sins of omission, where we get off track before the Lord. The temptations are great.

And so what Jesus has said is that we should proactively pray.

When Jesus was entering a hard time in His ministry—and sometimes when we're going through great challenges, the temptation to sin for relief goes up—Jesus was entering a very difficult time when He was going to be arrested and beaten and then crucified. He went to His disciples and took them out to pray.

And as He commissioned them to pray, and He withdrew to pray a little bit, He said this in Matthew chapter 26, verse 41. He said, watch and pray. Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.

For the spirit is willing. Your spirit wants to do what's right. If you're born into the family of God, the Holy Spirit's motor is inside of you wanting to please God. The spirit is willing, but the flesh isn't very strong in this. It's weak.

And so pray proactively that you'll not fall into temptation or enter into temptation.

Jesus said when you look ahead in your life, identify those areas where you know you're weak and pray proactively. If you have a tendency toward depression or anxiety or some temptation for things to look at, or some kind of challenge in your physical life where you're tempted one way or another, and you know you're entering a vulnerable area, be on your knees in prayer that God would keep you from falling into that temptation.

Look ahead. Watch. Pray. Be pleading with God for strength to live above the sin in your life.

The Apostle Paul understood this as he prayed for the believers in Ephesus. He said this: for this reason I bow my knees before the Father, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts.

The key to overcoming temptation is identifying our weaknesses and praying for God's strength to help us overcome them.