

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fifth Sunday After Trinity, July 16, 2017

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 7, 458:8, 410, 353, 611:7.

Lessons: Job 5: 17-27, 2 Timothy 4:16-18, Luke 4: 14-30.

Sermon Text: Matthew 6: 13b (KJV)

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This last petition of the Lord's Prayer is presented "*as the sum of all*" and as praying "*In conclusion*". In fact, some who use the Lord's Prayer stop at this petition and do not add the doxology. As it is now memorized from Luther's Small Catechism, we read **But deliver us from evil**. *What does this mean? In conclusion, we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil that threatens body and soul, property and reputation, and finally when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.*

So with a very broad stroke we ask God for deliverance. Deliverance or rescue suggests the end of some kind of trouble or problem. We know we shall have the trouble of sin as long as we live on earth, but we pray with confidence

DELIVER US FROM EVIL

- 1. God WILL deliver us!**
- 2. An example from Scripture of deliverance in the life of Saint Paul.**

This petition is closely connected with the previous petitions, particularly the Sixth Petition: "*lead us not into temptation*". In one sense, this is sort of the opposite side of the coin: one side asks "don't let us be tempted above what we are able to bear" and the other side asks "deliver us from every evil that tempts us".

The New International Version reads "*but deliver us from the evil one.*" The King James Version gives a broader picture when it prays for deliverance from "evil". The Greek has the definite article, the word "the", meaning "the evil" or "the evil one". In a previous sermon we mentioned "the devil" when we also talked about "the world" and "the flesh" as "the unholy three" that are constantly attacking us.

The devil, of course, is "the evil one". He is the one who first tempted Eve and Adam, and he continues to be behind all evil which would lead us away from all that God represents and into eternal damnation in a real hell. He tempts us every day.

All evils, which are but the consequences of sin, are included in this last petition of the Lord's Prayer: evils of the body, evils of the soul, evils of property, evils of honor.

Luther writes in his Large Catechism: In the Greek text this petition reads thus: Deliver or preserve us from the Evil One, or the Malicious One; and it looks as if Christ were speaking of the devil, as if the entire substance of all our prayer is directed against our chief enemy. For it is the devil who hinders among us everything that we pray for: the name and honor of God, God's kingdom and will, our daily bread, a cheerful good conscience, and we could list all the petitions.

We might then pray this petition thinking of anything and everything which at the moment might be designated as the evil thing. So this petition becomes a catchall for all of the evils which have not been mentioned previously. Each time we pray the Lord's Prayer different evils may come to mind. Our danger is that we might hold those evils so closely before our eyes that they keep us from seeing that our Father is greater than any or all of them. The Psalmist tells us "**God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble**" (Psalm 46:1).

Martin Luther paraphrased that verse in the great Reformation hymn “A Mighty Fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon”.

In this petition we might sum up the entire prayer: Dear Father, help that we be rid of all these calamities. But there is also included whatever evil may happen to us under the devil's kingdom – poverty, shame, death, and, in short, all the agonizing misery and heartache of which there is such an abundance on the earth. For since the devil is not only a liar, but also a murderer, he constantly seeks our life, and works his anger whenever he can afflict our bodies with misfortune and harm. Thus the devil tempts to all manner of sin and all sorts of terrible calamities. Thus we pray against this arch-enemy without ceasing. For unless God preserved us, we would not be safe from him even for an hour.

We are asking God to keep every evil from us; to rescue us from all evils which attack us, and to finally deliver us from all evil by giving us a blessed end. When we see all the horrible earthly deaths by which men die, we ask for a blessed end to this life on earth.

As long as we are in this world, we shall have to endure many evils. Scripture teaches us that ***“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.”*** Acts 14:22 (NIV) Such hardships are the consequences of our sins. But we ask God to deliver us from all of them by granting us a blessed end, that is, by keeping us in the faith of Jesus until we die, and then take us from this vale of tears, this life of sorrow and trouble, to himself into heaven, where there shall be no more sin and pain. We read in the book of Revelation of God delivering believers: ***“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*** Revelation 21:4 (NIV) God will instead give to them joy and pleasures forevermore. The Psalmist speaks of those in this way: ***“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”*** Psalm 16:11 (NIV)

And so we pray that we may depart in peace and be with Christ. The words of the aged Simeon in the temple come to mind: ***“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation.”*** Luke 2:29-30 (NIV)

This is one of those six petitions which ask first of all for spiritual blessings. But even here we see how God wishes us to pray to him also for all the things which affect our bodily interests, so that we seek and expect help nowhere else than in him. In praying for deliverance from all evil things and from the evil one, this becomes the final petition. For if we are to be preserved and delivered from all evil, the name of God must first be hallowed in us, his kingdom must be with us, and his will must be done in our lives. After that he will finally preserve us from sin and shame, and, in addition, from everything that may hurt or injure us.

Our Savior would not teach us to ask our Father in heaven for deliverance from evil if no deliverance was available. In our epistle lesson you heard Saint Paul say ***“I was delivered”*** (2 Timothy 4: 16). Even in his first letter to Timothy Paul wrote of his past persecutions and sufferings – the kinds of evil things that happened to him: ***“Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”*** (2 Timothy 3:11) The word here translated “rescued” is also translated “deliver”. We want to view all evil from the same perspective as Paul did. Our Father will hear and help us!

In our epistle lesson we find great encouragement that our prayer to be delivered from temptation will be answered. At the time of the writing of this second letter to Timothy, a younger pastor, Saint Paul is in prison in Rome and he is anticipating execution. A few verses before our Epistle lesson, Paul put it this way: ***“I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.”*** (2 Timothy 4:6) As Saint Paul thinks about his imminent death, he looks back upon his life and he summarizes it this way: ***“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”*** (2 Timothy 4:7) As Saint Paul thinks about fighting the good fight, finishing the race, keeping the faith, he certainly credits God with doing those things. He writes ***“But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength....”*** (2 Timothy 4:17)

It is a fact that ***“in this world you will have trouble.”*** (John 16:33) But fortunately we, as Christians, know that we never have to face troubles alone; that the Lord stands by our side; that the Lord gives us strength in the face of the difficulties in this world. As Saint Paul looks upon why the Lord gave him strength, he realizes why in his life this happened. There was a reason. He knew the purpose of his life, as he says, ***“... so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.”*** (2 Timothy 4: 17) Saint Paul realized

that the world was evil. He knew the suffering and the pain that were in the world, and he wanted so badly to share with people the hope that is in Jesus Christ, and he was willing to live for that hope and he was willing to die for that hope.

His ministry, his life, were not easy. He had trouble everywhere he went. In Second Corinthians, chapter twelve, Saint Paul says, ***"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."*** Paul doesn't actually say what this ***"thorn in the flesh"*** is, but it must have been very painful or very difficult to deal with, for Saint Paul says, ***"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me."*** But God's answer to Saint Paul was, ***"My grace is sufficient for you"*** He reminded Saint Paul that in his weakness God's power would come through and Saint Paul is able to summarize at the end of that whole section, ***"For when I am weak then I am strong."*** It was the Lord who gave Saint Paul strength in the face of the troubles and in the face of the pain that he faced in this world.

Saint Paul also faced trouble as he faced persecution and he faced imprisonment. At times he faced hunger. When we pray, ***"but deliver us from evil,"*** we're praying that God would deliver us from evils of body and soul and also from evils of possessions and reputation. Possessions can become one of those things that become a stumbling block for people. Paul put it this way: ***"The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*** (1 Timothy 6:10)

But take heart! Jesus has more to say than ***"in this world you will have trouble."*** He says, ***"But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** (John 16:33) Jesus faced life in this sin-filled world and still lived a sinless life – for us! Jesus even faced death as they took him and put him on trial. They convicted him – unjustly – and they nailed him to a cross. Jesus suffered and Jesus died. But Jesus also rose again and he proclaimed victory over sin, he proclaimed victory over death, he proclaimed victory over evil. He won the ultimate victory. And by God's amazing grace, that victory belongs to us as God keeps us strong in the faith. Saint Paul says, ***"and I was delivered."*** We pray, ***"deliver us from evil."*** That is why Jesus came into this world. Paul fixes his sight on Christ as he says, ***"The Lord will rescue me from every evil and He will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory for ever and ever."***

Saint Paul wrote about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and what a difference that makes, when he wrote to the Corinthians and said, ***"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance ..."*** What's of first importance is what Christ has accomplished, as he says, ***"that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve."***

The reporters of the news of the world really have no "good news" for us. They report the goings-on of the world; and the things that are happening in the world aren't good. But all who believe in Jesus Christ as their only Savior from all their sins are God's children, baptized into Christ and called by the Gospel and enlightened with his gifts. God's children can confidently pray, no matter what happens, ***"But deliver us from evil!"***

We close today with this beautiful benediction from the epistle of Jude: ***"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."*** (Jude 1:24-25)