

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity, October 26, 2008**

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

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

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 today

**BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL**

- 1. God WILL deliver us!**
- 2. An example from Scripture of deliverance.**

The NIV reads "*but deliver us from the evil one.*" The KJV 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". We previously discussed "the devil" when we also talked about "the world" and "the flesh" as "the unholy three" that are constantly attacking us.

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.

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 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 the evil from the same perspective. 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 letter, 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 of 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, 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, 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 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 they aren't good. But all who believe 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)