

Deliverance

Catechism Reading: Q/A 127

Bible Reading:

Luke 10: 17-21; 22:24-46

Ephesians 5: 15-21

PREPARED BY

KEN GEHRELS

PASTOR

CALVIN CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

NEPEAN, ONTARIO, CANADA

Over the last few Sunday evenings we've begun to study our way through the Lord's Prayer, coming as far as the second petition, "*Your kingdom come.*"

It's where the Lord through His Word has made us pause to consider the nature of cosmic conflict;

the war between the imposter forces of hell under Satan, and those of Christ, the Ascended Lord and Ultimate Ruler of the Universe.

the war whose outcome has already been decided, but whose final battles have yet to be fought, and are even now yet being fought – both on an earthly stage, and in the heavenly realms by human believers, and spirit servants.

The gates of hell will not prevail!

That is Christ's assurance in Matthew 16.

The defensive line which the Evil One has set up **will** crumble.

Your Kingdom come!

Indeed, it has already come, and is coming in all its fullness on the day when the final trumpet will sound.

But what of the time between now and then?

And what of the well-being of the soldiers on the front lines?

How do believers like you and I survive the conflict?

The Lord's Prayer, like the 10 commandments, is divided into two main sections, the first group of petitions dealing directly with God, and the second dealing with human needs and life.

In the first section we find the request, *Your Kingdom come.*

In the second we find a parallel request. Can you think what it would be?

.....*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

Join me as we consider the great Cosmic battle from the human perspective.

We'll go to the Catechism for guidance.

Read with me, please:

Q/A 127

Lead us not into temptation....

The Bible in the original Greek uses the word *Pyrasmos* for *temptation*.

The root word is *pyr*.

from which we get *pyromaniac*.

It is the word for *fire*.

Pyrasmos is *to be put into the fire*.

The Bible speaks of *being in the fire* in two ways:

- the purifying fires of God.
- the fires of hellish temptation and suffering

This morning we celebrated Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came down as *fire*.

1 Corinthians 3 speaks of the sum total of our life's work being tested by the fire of God's judgement.

All that we do apart from a foundation of faith in Christ will be burned up and destroyed.

That is the fire, the *pyrasmos*, of God.

1 Peter 1:6 says that in this life we suffer various trials - true enough.

Oh so terribly, terribly true!

Was talking to one family this week where both husband and wife groaned to me on separate occasions, "*Will it ever quit?*"

Know the feeling?

"*Why does this happen?*" We all ask the question.

And sometimes,

not always, – be clear about that!!! –

but ***sometimes***

The challenges and sense of slogging and uphill traveling

Sometimes that comes, says v.7 of 1 Peter -

so that the genuineness of your faith-- being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

We are put into the fire of God - *pyrasmos*.

We don't want to ***ever*** face these chapters of life with arrogant self-confidence.

The face plants become all the more spectacular every time we do that.

At least, that is how it is with me. I don't know about you.

The times when I think I've got a pretty good rhythm of prayer going, something hiccups and I'm roaring through a day completely ignoring the One who promised to be with me always. Two days later I finally realize, we haven't even spoken!

When I think that I'm being all kind to my neighbor, in a real groove of servant love, I find myself walking away from a conversation where I've spilt a bit of gossip about some dumb jerk.

Splat!!

The Catechism joins with the deep traditions of Christianity in naming the big three that challenge and threaten faithful living:

our flesh

the world

the devil.

Our flesh is one of the culprits of twisted living.

The fire of God works to purify that.

A good chunk of what the Lord is burning away is human arrogance and over-confidence.

I deeply appreciate the Reformed doctrine of *Total Depravity*. It is so right on the mark in naming what seems so evident, and what still - somehow - people have a hard time admitting to.

We've all got a bit of a twisted streak inside.

A spiritual mis-alignment that only the Holy Spirit can straighten out.

A spiritual mis-alignment that the Devil likes to prey on.

All of us also have this little dark magnet inside that seems to work like a moral autopilot steering us towards forms of entertainment, business choices and social situations in the world that are spiritually destructive and debasing. The Lord is at work constantly setting us back on course with His purifying fire.

And while that happens, all of us who are believers walk around with a proverbial target on our back. Satan is gunning for us. He'll use any advantage or toe-hold to get into our lives and set raging hellish fires of destruction. That's the other type of *pyrasmos*, being in the fire.

From this we desperately need divine protection and intervention.

Hence **Luke 22: 24-46**

Let's read that together - p.87 (NT).

It's the time of great cosmic significance.

This is a *kairos* moment in salvation history; a huge event, as the cross looms large and the eternal outcome of Creation hangs in the balance.

Jesus prepares to face all the accumulated forces of Hell.

His disciples are with Him.

And what happens?

This little group of impoverished ex-fishermen, wandering behind an unemployed itinerant preacher begin to crab and argue about who is most important.

No sooner does Jesus get that mess sorted out than one of them stands up and begins thumping his chest like some misguided Tarzan, self-confidently proud of how resolute **his** faith is, and how **he** would never abandon Jesus..... **ever!!**

Jesus quietly says, "*I'm praying for you, Peter*" and leads them off.

Into the garden they go. The spiritual pressure gets greater. Everyone can feel it. Jesus prays and struggles. Angels attend him. And the disciples?

.....they sleep.

Twice through this sorry set of events Jesus says,

"Pray that you may not come into the time of trial."

"Lead us not into temptation."

The devil is so strong. The unbelieving forces of this world are overwhelming. My own flesh is twisted.

Lord.....

.....HELP!!

Or as Ursinus and Olevianus put it:

By ourselves we are too weak to hold our own even for a moment.... and so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong with the strength of Your Holy Spirit so that we may not go down to defeat in this spiritual struggle, but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory.

[Q/A 127]

Whether it be an attack from the devil, the pressures of society, or just our fallen human nature; – the devil, the world, our flesh –

*Whether it come directly from hell, or Lord if it be your work to clean us up
face it alone!*

We can't

We need you! Deliver us!

And so we pray.

Know what happens as we pray?

Know what this petition forces us to do?

It forces us sort out our motives.

It forces us to ask what really matters to us.

What do we **really want** our lives to look like and become?

In Mark 10 we read twice about Jesus asking people, "*What do you want?*"

V.36 is the first time - *What do you want?* And the disciples come wanting to grab the best seat in the house when Jesus' power is fully revealed. Their greed gets hold of them and they want to jump the line.

V.51 is the second time - *What do you want?* And blind Bartimaeus helplessly asks, *I just want to see.*

Believers at Calvin, what do you really, truly, desperately want?

Lord, lead us not into temptation.

Lord, we want to live pure lives.

Lord, we want to be in, and experience, the presence of God.

Lord, we desperately want to reflect Jesus.

.....deliver us from the evil one.....

We're tired of our stupid sinfulness.

We're bored with the cheap offerings of the world.

We detest Satan.

Deliver us!!

You know,

Somehow, God in His sovereignty allows Satan to, in the words of Luke 22:31, sift us - to separate the wheat from the chaff; the kernel of real faith from the outer husk of religious behavior.

Satan tosses us into the air. He blows hard. He shakes us around on the metal sieve of life, hoping that when he is done nothing will be left.

Jesus prays for us as He prayed for Simon.

He calls us to prayer.

Deliver us from the evil one.

AND

He calls us to be Christ-like support to others.

v.32: *Simon, when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*

There are always going to be situations that are spiritually dangerous for us.

There are times that will be more than we can handle.

The promise of Scripture in 1 Corinthians 10:13 is that when the shaking and blowing and sifting happens our Sovereign Father in Heaven will always provide a way out.

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing He will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Friends, look around.

See these other believers?

They are, more often than not, the way out that God provides.

I can't tell you how often I've been caught in a line of thinking that was not terribly helpful, and just at the moment that it looked to be all coming apart the phone rings or there's a knock at the door and someone is there with just the right thing to say.

Coincidence?

Hardly.

Deliver us from the evil one.....

Simon - believers at Calvin - when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.

When you have turned back -

Remembering that you, too, are prone to fall.

That you've been there, in the ditch. Pride beaten. Dirt on the soul.

Pickup and cleaned off by Jesus.

Welcomed home again as a prodigal.

Declared forgiven and given new heaping helpings of the Spirit.

In that grace, strengthen your brothers and sisters.

Yearn for holiness, believer.

Pray for it.

And stick together.

In that way, then, just as with the other activities of Kingdom living

go forward - as we said last week -

go forward..... with confidence.

Let's not give in to the devil's lies and become timid in our faith,
cowering behind the pews.

Luke 10 gives words of confidence and hope -

Read with me, please: **LUKE 10: 17-20**

Jesus isn't talking about literal snakes and scorpions. Those are biblical images for the great snake in the garden of Eden, the devil.

Jesus gives to His followers the authority to overcome, to step on, demonic influences in this world, and in our lives.

Satan's grip on life is not final.

The authority and power of Jesus is!

And yet,

We **must** remain very conscious at all times about who is the source of the spiritual power that pulses through our spirits.

We must **never** lapse into overconfidence or **self**-confidence —
rejoicing that the spirits submit to us.

We must be equally certain to keep our hand firmly in the hand of Jesus,

consciously dependent on Him ----

rejoicing that our names are written in heaven.

As the disciples said - "*Lord, **IN YOUR NAME** even the demons submit to us!*"

The one name that the evil spiritual entities cannot stand to hear
and cannot resist.

The name of Jesus.

No matter how hard evil shouts and screams;

No matter how big the numbers seem;

Jesus remains the stronger!!

So we submit to that name.

Which is one of the reasons why I want to highlight again what is a quiet tradition in Reformed Christianity -
- the call to publically profess our faith multiple times. We do it when we make our public profession.
We do it at baptism. We do it at Lord's Supper. We do it when being ordained to office.

It's our equivalent of coming forward multiple times for an altar call.

Reaffirming our commitment to Jesus.

Like a bride saying to the bridegroom - "*I love you. I need you.*"

Can't ever say that enough!

Never ashamed that others hear it.

Each time reaffirming the marriage bond.

Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Let me conclude today by guiding you to a passage of Scripture that provides some concrete helps on living in the power of the name of Jesus,
free from the icy grip of evil.

Read with me, please -

Ephesians 5: 15-21

[READ V.15-17]

Spend time in the pages of His Word.

Meet with fellow believers to figure out what that means. Don't be satisfied with simply sucking back sermons, friends. Bible study is crucial!

Teach each other.

Learn from each other as you study the powerful word of God.

[READ V.18]

The spiritual world, like earthly nature, abhors a vacuum. Don't leave any room in your soul for the devil or his little henchmen to squeeze in.

Pray for, crave, seek

more and more and more of the Spirit's presence and power.

Be honest - even if it hurts - in your relentless search for areas of moral weakness or spiritual lethargy that may quench the Spirit's fire.

[READ V.19-20]

And make sure to worship! It's one of the most powerful weapons we have in our arsenal to build spiritual stamina and to stand against the attacks of Satan.

I believe the Evil One knows that. And I believe that's why he eggs on the church to get so hung up about the outer **form** of worship to the point of fighting and walking away from each other over things like standing or sitting, blue book or gray, raising hands or folding them....

it's why he likes to get us focused on what feels and looks good to **us**.....

.....rather than focusing on the Powerful Risen Lord that is on the throne and who is worthy of all praise and honor.....
whatever the form.

[READ V.21]

Now we're back to what Jesus told Peter.
We can't fight the battle of faith alone.
And we can't do it by demanding that **we** be at the top of the heap.
Rather -
towel in hand, assuming the foot-washing posture of Jesus.

In the Word.

Praying to be filled.

Worship.

Living the servant life.

Our tools against the Devil.

Powerful tools.

Warfare tools.

Tools that, when used regularly and in the love of Christ, guarantee victory.

That is God's promise.

And in that promise we can leave here to live, and serve.

with confidence.