

—Westminster Shorter Catechism—  
*Lesson 62—What do we pray for in the sixth petition? Q. 106*

The last and final petition which Christ directs us to pray for ourselves is for *protection*. Having promise of *provision* for our calling and of *pardon* for our sins as we go about it, the only other thing we need is *protection* as we give ourselves to it. These are our *daily* needs and Christ teaches us to look for them from our Father *daily*. We can't live without these things, but in having them, we have all we need to pursue our chief end.

### Prayer for Protection

- I. The word *temptation* is used in two very different senses in Scripture, in a bad sense and in a good sense.
  - A. In its good sense, it is a test, Gn 22.1; Js 1.2-4 (KJV). In this sense, a temptation is used by God to test and manifest spiritual strength and moral integrity that would otherwise not be exercised or seen, Gen 39.7-12. A temptation in this sense is as the furnace that tests true gold and as the storm that tests strong roots. In this sense, trials of various kinds test and strengthen the faithful and patient soul, maturing it so that it lacks nothing. Temptations are used by God in this way as tests to demonstrate our character and strength and to develop our graces.
  - B. In its bad sense, it's an enticement to sin staged by the world, the devil, and our own flesh, Eph 2.2; 1Pet 5.8; Js 1.14. In this sense, temptations are designed to interrupt our communion with God, distract our attention from His loving commands, oppose our efforts to advance His Kingdom, and induce us to bring shame and damage to His cause.
    1. Owen defines temptation in its evil sense in this way, "Temptation is anything, state, way, or condition that, upon any account whatever, has a force or efficacy to seduce or draw the mind and heart of a man from its obedience, which God requires of him, into any sin, in any degree of it whatever."
- II. Thus, a temptation may be good or evil, for salvation or destruction, according to *circumstances*, according to *the intention* with which it is sent, and according to *the spirit* in which it is met.
  - A. A temptation may lead the unwary soul into the chambers of death (Js 1.14-15) or it may put a man in the way of gaining for himself the crown of eternal life, Js 1.12.
  - B. A tempted man may come out of his temptation a holier, stronger, happier man, Job 23.10. Or he may crumble to dust beneath the tempter's fiery darts, coming out of the furnace as reprobate silver.
- III. What are we praying for, then? For *assisting* grace and for *preventing* grace.
  - A. Knowing our weaknesses, we're praying that God would grant us the grace not to shrink from his disciplinary and strengthening trials, but to be built up by them, Ex 33.15; Lk 22.40. God tries us to make us stronger, Eph 6.10-18. He tries us to build us up, enflames us to remove our dross, and presses us to squeeze out the oil of our graces. Christ teaches us to be on guard against temptation and to pray that every temptation may be faced with the intention, resolve, and grace to grow in holiness by it.
  - B. Knowing our proneness to sin and the fearful power of our adversary, we're praying that God would support us in our trials and deliver us from being finally hurt by them. If they must come, and we must face them (Mt 18.7), then we're to pray that God would uphold us in them so that *even if we fall*, we may not fail, but *be restored* by repentance and *strengthened* by experience, to the praise of the glory of His grace, Lk 22.31-32; 1Pet 5.8-10.

### Inferences

- I. A pardoned sinner is not past danger. The war for our souls cannot be lost, but we may surely lose many a battle and get many a wound in the meantime. And so as much as we pray for pardon, so we pray for protection against harm and recovery from every wound.

- II. Every temptation has its time and season and runs its course and we need to pay attention to it so we can get out early, Gen 39.11-12.
- A. There is a time when it's possible to resist the temptation, when the bait is being dangled and the heart is being drawn. It's at this initial, early stage that we have a critical choice to make. And if we don't make the choice to flee, we'll suddenly find ourselves trapped, ensnared, and guilty. à Kempis, "There first comes to the mind a bare thought of evil, then a strong imagination thereof (a fascination and fantasizing with it), afterwards delight and evil desire, and then consent." Js 1.14-16.
  - B. So if we would offer this petition to God, we must keep a sleepless watch over our thoughts. We must beware of those times, places, people, and states of mind in which evil thoughts intrude themselves.
    1. Experience soon teaches the wary believer that a vacant mind and an idle life is the very door of temptation. A busy life, by God's blessing, is a safe life. One of the greatest helps against lust (of any sort) is to be about your calling.
    2. Curiosity concerning evil and forbidden things is a cause of many temptations which assail the soul.
    3. Also, times of reaction, isolation, loneliness, and depression are often times when it's very difficult to keep temptations out of the heart.
  - C. Temptation in this sense deceives us because it hides itself behind a bait of seeming good. The hook of evil is always buried behind a seeming good to be obtained, usually the satisfying of some desire or the preventing of some evil. The key is to be able to see through the gilt to the bait, Mt 16.26.
  - D. Also, we must remember that the design of the great tempter is always our ruin. He would have us fall into sin, which always breeds misery.
- III. Consider well how circumstances affect your temptations. Why would you put yourself in harm's way and tempt the devil to tempt you by entering into those circumstances which you already know will serve as fuel to the fires of temptation? Why would you knowingly, intentionally enter into temptation?
- A. God sometimes providentially places us in tempting circumstances, but the difference between God placing you there (cf. Joseph) and you placing yourself there (cf. Peter) is you can be sure of God's grace to resist and escape only when He placed you there and not you yourself.
- IV. Every temptation has a divine objective and a satanic objective, because as every temptation is ordained by God, so the devil's quick to take advantage of every temptation as an opportunity for your downfall.
- A. How does knowing this affect how we respond to temptation? God intends your sanctification while the devil intends your ruin. But what do you intend? Whose side will you take? Gen 39.7-12.
  - B. Never forget that sinning is more terrible than suffering. In sinning we are conformed to the devil, but in suffering we are conformed to Christ. Therefore pray earnestly to be kept from every temptation to sin.
- V. How does the spirit with which we meet a temptation affect its outcome?
- A. What preparations are you making for overcoming all your temptations? Or are you not making any preparations and content simply to meet them as they come with whatever spirit, resolve, and weapon you may or may not happen to have on hand? Do you see the foolishness in this?
  - B. *Watch and pray.* Watching without praying is a contempt of God and praying without watching is a tempting of God.
- VI. Notice the several encouragements implied in this petition.
- A. Our temptations are under God's control. He determines, according to our ability and grace given to us, when, by whom, and to what degree we're to be tempted, 1Cor 10.13; 2Cor 12.9.
  - B. God is with us in our temptations as our Help, Ps 46.1. He's the Captain of our salvation to lead us into the temptation, keep us in it, deliver us from it, and intercede for us all the way along, Heb 2.10, 18; 7.25; Lk 22.32.
  - C. The result is certain. Satan shall be put under our feet, Rom 16.20. Satan's kingdom shall be destroyed, Rev 20.2-3, 9-10; and his temptations only hasten on this glorious victory in us and in the world, 1Pet 1.6-7; Acts 4.26-30.