Flight attendant – lost instructions

I. WHAT ARE WE DELIVERED FROM?

A. Our sinful condition

Clarify Matthew 6:13 – “…deliver us from evil…” – “tou ponerou” – lit. “the evil” – it’s masculine in gender so Jesus apparently meant “the evil one” – masculine noun indicates the devil – if it is taken in a more general sense, the idea would be deliverance from sin and evil – sin is not an abstract idea – but it is personified in the person of Satan who is the father of all evil – John 8:44 – “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” – the source of all:

- False religions that claim truth
- Relationships that crumble
- Lies that distort the truth
- Temptation to sin

Struggle against evil is a constant of human existence:

- Adam sinned in the garden – his first son killed his little brother
- Sin of man grew through Adam’s descendents – by Genesis 6 it was so bad that angels possessed human male bodies and had sex with women on earth
- 1500 years after Adam – Genesis 6:5 – “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” – Genesis 6:8 – “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” – Noah preached for 120 years – but God decided to start over – Genesis 7:23 – “…He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land…”
- New tactic – formed a new nation to guide the other nations – 2200 B.C. Abraham appeared – Israel failed miserably – led into captivity in Egypt
- 400 years later Moses appears to lead them out – wandered in desert for 40 years because of sin
- Finally possess their land around 1250 B.C.
- Instead of living by God’s standards and refraining from cultic sinful practices of surrounding nations, Israel adopts them
- 722 B.C. – Assyria captures northern nation of Israel – 586 B.C. – Nebuchadnezzar captures southern nation of Judah
- 400 years later Jesus appears – reveals sin of Israel – expands gospel to all people – initiates the church as the unique people of God made up of people from all nations and tongues

Man continues to struggle with evil – many want to ignore it – but we all know it when we see it – Hitler was evil – terrorists who blow up people just because they are not Muslim are wicked

Problem – no one thinks they are evil – first thing to understand – we are born into sin – Psalm 51:5 – “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.” – Ephesians 2:3 says sin is our very nature

The biggest problem with man isn’t his environment, his family, his socio-economic status, his race, or his lack of education
Sin is in us – our flesh – our human nature – is corrupt to the core – not a popular message – you can’t improve on your self-image enough to overcome that – it’s our spiritual DNA

Romans 5:12 – “...just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—” – that is all of us

B. Specific sin

Our condition of sin is why we do such stupid, evil, corrupt, dumb stuff

- Disbelief – Genesis 3:1 - Satan tempted Eve with “...has God said...” – questioned God’s instruction regarding eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- Lies – Genesis 3:4 – Satan responded to Eve’s description of God’s command saying they would die if they ate of the tree – “...You surely shall not die!”

These two sins are at the core of all sin – man disbelieves God’s Word and thinks he can get away with it – the children of Israel failed to believe God even after miracles – David numbered his troops – “Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father had done.” (1 Kings 11:6) – the Old Testament is a litany of sinful behavior – never glossed over

The list of sins could go on and on – 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 – “Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” – you say, “That’s not me” – how about Matthew 5 – Jesus lists anger, lust, ungodly divorce, making promises you can’t keep, revenge, hating your enemy

Is it any wonder that Jesus instructed us to pray – “Deliver us from evil” – it is in us, around us, we are steeped in a sinful environment

II. HOW ARE WE DELIVERED?

“Church of the Holy Staircase” (Scala Santa) in Rome – small chapel right across from St. John in Lateran Church – consists of three staircases and a small chapel – at the entry is a staircase of 28 steps of Tyrian marble – Constantine’s mother Helena brought it back from Jerusalem – legend says it is the actual staircase of Pilate's house, which Jesus descended after being condemned – it is believed that His blood is still on the steps – some believe if you climb it on your hands and knees and say a prayer on each step you are guaranteed time off in purgatory – Luther was repulsed by it – thus began the Reformation – but people are still climbing them! – saw it last week in Rome!

A. God’s part

Dig into the grammar a little – “deliver” – aorist imperative – it reflects a one-time, in the past, command – Jesus is not telling us to pray for deliverance from individual sins – but to pray for a one-time for all time deliverance from the condition of sin – our biggest need isn’t to be delivered from the consequences of one lie or one angry blowup or one prideful moment – the biggest need we have is to be delivered from our very nature!

This is what Paul prayed in Romans 7:14-18 – “...but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.” – this is not written by an unbeliever or about an unbeliever – this is the Apostle Paul – he is expressing the honest conclusion of every believer – “Why do I keep sinning when I don’t want to?” – because sin is in you

That’s why Paul cries out in Romans 7:24 – “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” – even though God has lifted the veil from our eyes to see our sin – even though we have apprehended the reality of the cross – we still marvel at the condition of our heart – “Who will free us from this dilemma?”
But Paul continues in Romans 7:25-8:1-2 – “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

The bigger picture – Scripture affirms God’s eventual defeat of Satan all through Scripture – Genesis 3:15 – “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.” – Romans 16:20 – “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet…”

Jesus demonstrated this in Matthew 16 – took disciples to Caesarea Philippi Northern Israel at the foot of Mt. Carmel – on the border with Syria and Lebanon – it was near the city of Dan where Jeroboam first set up the rebellion of the northern ten tribes against southern kingdom Judah – knew people needed religion – set up worship of two golden calves that he erected in Dan – became center for Baal worship – plagued Israel throughout the Old Testament – eventually Baal was replaced by Greek fertility gods like Pan – town became known as Panias – Banias today – When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided among three sons – Herod Philip built a temple here to honor Caesar – called town Caesarea Philippi

It would have looked like this – Temple to Caesar on the left – Temple to Pan in the center -

Today it looks like this:
Huge cave at back of Temple – water flowed up from the cave – they thought dead spirits go and come from Hades here – thus, it was called “The gates of hell” – each spring they would throw various sacrifices (goats – humans?) into the cave – if the body floated back the gods had rejected the sacrifice – if it didn’t the gods had accepted it.

Jesus asked disciples – Mark 8:27 – “…Who do people say I am?” – Peter answered, Matthew 16:16 – “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” – Jesus answered, Matthew 16:17-18 - “…Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” – Jesus affirms three things here – 1) The illumination of God in the call to be saved – 2) The testimony of Peter as the basis for the church – 3) His absolute dominion over hell – neither the political rule of Caesar nor the pagan picture of the afterlife would be able to hold up under the onslaught of the proclamation of the Gospel - Jesus took disciples here to demonstrate absolute power over all the political and pagan gods – and His absolute power over hell itself – Jesus is proclaiming His absolute power in one of the darkest corners of Israel.

He will keep that promise – at the end of the Great Tribulation God will bind Satan and throw him into the bottomless pit where he will not be able to deceive people for 1000 years – finally, at the end of the 1000 year millennium after Satan has been released from the pit and attempts to gather another army for one final battle in Revelation 20:9-10 – “…they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

B. Our part

But until that time we continue to live in this world – we fight a three-way battle against:

- The flesh – Romans 7 – Galatians 5:19-21 – “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- The world system – 1 John 2:16 – “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”
• Satan – Ephesians 6:12 – “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

But how do we fight them? – word of warning – many evangelicals say any instruction on living the Christian life smacks of legalism – one author calls it “Accidental Pharisees” – he calls any effort on our part to live a holy life “overzealous faith” – but the Bible tells us to “...work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13) – this doesn’t mean that we do good works to earn our salvation – Ephesians 2:9 – our salvation is “not a result of work so that no one may boast” – but Philippians 2:10 continues – “…created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” – our desire to do good works is not legalism – it is an expression of our desire to please our Lord

Same with the instruction:
• Romans 12:9 – “…Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.” – do you abhor what is evil? – or do you tolerate it? – do you call it by another name – do you presume on the grace of God to cover your sin – inventory your life – pride – selfishness
• 1 Thessalonians 5:22 – “abstain from every form of evil.” – what sins do you tolerate? – where do you go that blurs the lines? – what do you do that is questionable?

The principle – you’re either tolerating sin or you’re running to Christ for deliverance – you’re either taking every thought captive or you’re playing with fire – A true Christian will “abhor evil” – he/she will want to “abstain from every form of evil”

The ultimate solution – the cross – it covers individual specific sin – but it also covers our sinful heart – Colossians 2:14-15 – “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

God reaches in to save individuals in the middle of this sinful world – John Piper’s oldest son Abraham was taken through church discipline in their church when he was 19 – excommunicated – “All I wanted to do was drink gallons of cheap Sangria and sleep around” – God had other ideas – after four years of profligate living, God delivered Abraham from his evil lifestyle – “One Tuesday morning, before 8 o’clock, I went to the library to check my e-mail. I had a message from a girl I’d met a few weeks before, and her e-mail mentioned a verse in Romans. I went down to the Circle K and bought a 40-ounce can of Miller High Life for $1.29. Then I went back to where I was staying, rolled a few cigarettes, cracked open my drink, and started reading Romans. I wanted to read the verse from the e-mail, but I couldn’t remember what it was, so I started at the beginning of the book. By the time I got to chapter ten, the beer was gone, the ashtray needed emptying and I was a Christian.

Have you prayed, “Deliver me from the evil one?”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the common perception about evil in our culture?
2. What does Psalm 51:5 tell us about man’s natural condition?
3. How did Solomon do “evil in the sight of the Lord” in 1 Kings 11:1-7?
4. What did God do with the sin of those who believe according to Colossians 2:13-15?
5. What is our attitude to be toward sin according to Romans 12:9 and 1 Thessalonians 5:22?
6. What struggles do you have with the evil one?