

Rogate
John 6:23-33

Since you are a son of Adam or daughter of Eve, you will have tribulation in the world. God's righteous judgment against sin in the Garden of Eden included toil from labor and pain in childbearing. (Genesis 3) Another way to say it is that life is hard. You know this from experience. You do your best to prepare your kids for a sin filled world filled with sinners which makes life difficult, but they too must experience that life is hard for themselves. Your own sin and the sin of others is a source of tribulation for yourself and for others.

But you are also sons and daughters of God the Father through your baptism into Jesus' death and resurrection. This multiplies your tribulation. The world hates Jesus. It crucified Him. It will treat you, who are His brothers and sisters, no differently. Satan hates you. The stronger Man, Jesus, stole you from his kingdom into the kingdom of God. Satan will do everything to torment you and drag you back into his kingdom of despair. As parents try to prepare their kids for the cruelty of the world and the difficulty in maintaining your faith, Jesus prepares you today:

"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (v. 33b)

What does Jesus mean that He has overcome the world?

First, He lived a perfectly righteous life. He overcame temptation, testing, and torment and prevailed by living a righteous life before men and before God the Father. His righteousness is a righteousness that earns eternal life. You must have a perfect righteousness before God. Good intentions aren't enough, although if you're honest with yourself, you know that even your best intentions are tainted with selfish desires and warped ambitions.

Effort isn't enough, although if you're honest with yourself, you know that your strongest efforts always seem to fall short. Even though you're a Christian with the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit, you struggle.

"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing." (Romans 7:18-19)

You know this struggle because you live this struggle. But you also know Christ. His righteousness is perfect, and He gives you His righteousness as a gift. In your baptism you received Christ's perfect righteousness in exchange for your utter unrighteousness. You remember your baptism daily and struggle against your old Adam because you have the gift of righteousness and the Holy Spirit who helps you in your weakness.

First, Christ lived a perfect life that you or I could not. Second, He suffered and died on the cross to pay the atonement price for your sin. God doesn't wink at sin or look the other way. If you attempted to do this as parents, I think you would know what total brats you would have as kids. Our dear Father in heaven doesn't do that with us either. Just as you can't have true unity apart from truth, you can't have God's perfect mercy without His perfect justice! They go hand in hand. The good news is that God fulfilled the requirements of His justice by joining Himself to His creation by becoming Man and sacrificing Himself for our sins. Just as water and blood flowed from Jesus' side, God's perfect mercy flows unreservedly from the cross. God justified the world to Himself by paying the price for the sin of the world. Jesus won the victory over sin, death, and the devil. He gives that victory to you in your baptism. You now have the "newness of life" that Paul talks about in Romans.

And you need it!

Jesus doesn't take you out of this world. This is Jesus' prayer for you to our Father in heaven:

"I have given them your Word, and the world has hated them because they are not of this world, just as I am not of this world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one." (John 17:14-15)

You will have tribulation in this world. But Jesus does not leave you unarmed in the midst of this tribulation:

"In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God." (vv. 26-27)

In other words, God the Father promises to hear your prayer. Prayer is a wonderful weapon against all the tribulation you will face. God helps you in three specific ways in prayer.

First, God promises to hear and answer your prayers.

He doesn't promise to hear your prayer because you're worthy. And that is good news. If God's promise to hear your prayer depended on your worthiness, none of your prayers would be heard by Him. Proverbs 28:9 teaches us that God doesn't listen to the prayer of the unrighteous. He only hears the prayers of His children who are made righteous in baptism. In baptism, you are His dear child and you have the authority to talk to your Father in heaven "as dear children [talk to] their dear father." This is what Jesus is talking about when He says we are to pray in His name. We don't have to literally put "in Jesus' name" after each prayer although it's definitely a salutary practice. You have to be "in Jesus" for your prayer to be heard.

That is, you must be baptized to be heard by your Father in heaven. He promises not only to hear you, but to answer your prayer as well:

*“Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?”
(Matthew 7:9-11)*

God gives you the perfect thing you need at the perfect time. Too often, we ask God for things out of sinful desire. God forgives you for your sin and does not give you things that are harmful for you. He gives you what you need even if it feels like the opposite in your experience. We live in a sinful world and must all pass through death into life. This means we will experience suffering. But we have a God who knows suffering firsthand. Not one of us has suffered like Jesus suffered on the cross. His suffering is our comfort. In His suffering, we find relief for our suffering. And God adds a promise in the midst of our suffering:

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good.” (Romans 8:28)

This promise doesn't guarantee that you won't suffer bad things. And there are truly bad things out there like cancer. But God promises you that He will turn these things that happen to you, both good and bad, to your good. It is good that you cling to Christ in the midst of your suffering. It is good that you remain steadfast in your faith through death, no matter how terrifying that death may seem in your weakness. As Paul says, there's absolutely nothing that can separate you from the love of Christ! (Romans 8:37-39)

First, God promises to hear and answer your prayers. Second Jesus gives you the perfect prayer to pray.

The Lord's prayer is the perfect prayer. You could only pray this prayer for the rest of your life and you would have a perfect prayer life. First, God reminds you that you are His dear child. Then, He reminds you that His name and your life are kept holy by His precious Word taught in its truth and purity. In other words, God's Word is the source of your sanctification. Next God reminds you that He has given you His very own Holy Spirit to empower you to believe His promises and lead a godly life. Then He reminds you that He promises to keep you firm in His Word and faith until you die. Next, He reminds you that He is the source of every good and promises to provide for your every need. Then He brings to your remembrance the abundant grace upon grace He showers upon you with His forgiveness of sins. Next, He reminds you that He is your protection against "deception, false belief, and despair." Finally, He teaches you that He will give you a blessed end and will take you from this veil of tears to Himself in paradise.

Too many times, we fall into ruts in our praying and ask for only those things that we think we need. They usually only involve the fourth petition dealing with daily bread. We need constant reminder that our life is so much more than daily bread. When you find yourself in a prayer rut, I recommend that you spend some time praying and meditating on the Lord's prayer.

First, God promises to hear and answer your prayers. Second Jesus gives you the perfect prayer to pray. Third, God promises to pray for you!

Our lives are beset by weakness and tribulation. Sometimes it gets bad enough, we don't even know what to pray. We come to our wit's end and have no idea what to think or say. Paul addresses this in Romans:

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words." (Romans 8:26)

Sometimes, all we can say, if we can say anything, is “Lord, have mercy!” And God still promises to hear you. He knows your suffering. He knows your need. He will take care of you.

Prayer is indeed a wonderful gift in this world filled with tribulation. And you will know tribulation. You basically are promised a double dose of tribulation, in fact, as a child of God.

But Jesus has solved the problem that causes tribulation. He lived a perfect life and offered Himself as the spotless lamb of the world as a propitiation for the sin of the world. Sin is defeated. Death, the penalty for sin, is defeated. Satan, the tempter and accuser of brothers and sisters in Christ, is defeated. Jesus’ victory becomes your victory in your Baptism. No wonder we talk about baptism so much! That’s where God’s gift of forgiveness of sins, faith, and the Holy Spirit come to you personally. God does not remove you from the place of suffering but joins you in your suffering. He gives you the gift of prayer in the midst of your tribulations. God promises to hear you.

I will leave you with these words from your dear Father in heaven:

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me. (Psalm 50:15)

Amen.