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Briefing 32: Wednesday 30th September, 2020.

Dear friends,

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

If you had to take part in a reality TV show, which one would you choose? Strictly Come Dancing would be fun! And it would certainly get me fit. I'm sure the Great British Bake Off would be enjoyable, but I don't think I would last past week 1! Part of me would like to test myself on a Bear Grylls Survival Adventure, and my grandchildren would certainly like to see me try Total Wipeout, but the one I'd be most keen to avoid would be I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here. Now I'm not too squeamish with creepy crawlies, but some of those bush tucker challenges would push me over the edge and have me screaming 'I'm not a celebrity – but please get me out of here!'

The word *temptation* in this part of the Lord's Prayer really means times of trial. So, this part of the prayer is asking that the Lord would keep us from times when our faith is severely put to the test, and where we might be tempted to give in. That's an understandable prayer, isn't it? None of us look forward to pain and suffering, or go out of our way to find it. And since we know the Lord is sovereign and steers the paths of our lives, it's reasonable to pray '*Lord, you control all things, please don't lead me into times of trial where I might turn my back on you.*'

Jesus prayed that prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed that his father might open up another way to finish his mission that did not involve going to the cross. Jesus prayed that his time of trial and testing might be removed from him, just as we might. But then Jesus prayed: "*but not my will, but yours be done.*" In doing so, Jesus accepted that the time of trial and testing coming to him would be in God's will, confident that God his Father would keep him safe in it and accomplish his purposes through it.

That's where the second part of that sentence comes in. It's here we ask our Heavenly Father to deliver us from evil, or, as another translation puts it, *from the evil one*. When trials do come, we want to stand firm in our faith. We don't want Satan to be victorious over us and lead us into sin or apostasy, giving up on our faith. So we pray to be delivered from temptation and from Satan's schemes, so that just like Jesus, we might come to the end of our time of trial still trusting firmly in God as our Redeemer and deliverer.

Make no mistake, every Christian will face trials and temptations. All Christians are targets for the evil one who, through his plans and schemes, seeks to have God's children turn their backs on God and break his commands. But here's the good news: God is sovereign even in our times of trial. He works through our trials to purify and strengthen our faith (1 Peter 1:7). As we stand firm under our trials, our witness encourages others to stand firm in their times of trial (Rev 2:13). Even pain and suffering, which appears to us to have no good purpose, is included in the *all things* that work together for the good of those who love God (Romans 8:28). Nothing, no matter how severe the trial, can ever separate us from God's astonishing, death-defeating love (Romans 8:31-39). And we are never, ever tested beyond which we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

So by all means, let's pray to avoid times of severe temptation, but when those times do come, let's pray for the strength to stand firm in our faith, and for God's glory and kingdom to advance through our suffering.

Why not put these thoughts into a prayer like this...

Heavenly Father, you are good, and all you do is good, but the Lord Jesus told us that in this world we will have trouble. We know, too, that we have an enemy who seeks to destroy us. So please, Heavenly Father, keep me from those times of temptation and trial which would stretch my faith to breaking point. Do not let me be tested beyond which I can bear, do not let my enemy triumph over me.

Thank you that you promise that you will never leave me or forsake me. Thank you that you are sovereign, and can even use evil situations for my good and your greater glory. Protect me and strengthen me I pray, that I might remain true and faithful, no matter what trials you allow to come into my life.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

OTHER NEWS:

APCM UPDATES: over the last 2 weeks, both churches have held their annual parochial church meetings. Thank you to all those who stayed. My Rector's report for St Nicholas was circulated previously, but for those attached to St Mary's Graveley, you can find my comments attached to this email.

I'm also delighted to confirm that Karen Walker and Mike Wilton were elected as churchwardens for St Nicholas, and that Hilary Thompson and Janet Singleton were elected as churchwardens for St Mary's. The PCCs for both churches are now as follows: Do pray for all those serving in this way.

St Nicholas: The Rector, Karen Walker, Mike Wilton, Jason Cox, Martin Bailey, Chris Taplin, Edward Kaahwa, Christine Chambers and Mark Parker. Cathy Bibby and Stuart Marshall were elected as Deanery Synod representatives, and Alison Hare will be co-opted at our 1st meeting to act as PCC secretary.

St Mary's: The Rector, Hilary Thompson, Janet Singleton, Eunice Sirkett, Doug Steele and Paul Blanshard. Amanda Steele was elected as Deanery Synod representative.

PRAY WITH US! Next Tuesday morning we'll be praying again via ZOOM from 7am-8am. Contact Anthony Taylor on anthonyjtaylor@btinternet.com for a link.

EXPLORING CHRISTIANITY: Over the autumn, we are planning to run another course for people to explore the Christian faith. **The Identity Course** (*more information here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJ691ji_6-0*) works through the gospel of John to explore who Jesus was, why he came and what it means to follow him. The 7 interactive sessions also cover some of the big questions people ask, such as why does God allow suffering, how can I believe the Bible and why do I have to go to church? For more information, please email me.

LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER: Along with hundreds of other ministers, I recently signed a letter regarding the need to keep churches open. You can read the letter here: <https://ministersletter.wordpress.com/the-letter/> and see an interview given by Rev Ian Paul on Sky News here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hJusnMad3A>.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD. The shops are already selling Christmas cards, so that's the signal to start thinking about our shoe boxes to send to children around the world. The new video about the campaign can be viewed here! Do take a look, get inspired, and start your shopping! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5VVxDymhGr4>

This year St Nicholas will be acting as a local hub, with churches, schools and individuals bringing their boxes to us to put in large cartons to send to the UK depots. Stuart Marshall will be heading up that team - but he needs volunteers to help him from 9th-16th November. We are also looking for people to act as drivers to collect boxes from individual locations to bring to church. If you would be willing to help with that, please contact Stuart, who will give you more details. His email address is stuart.j_marshall@ntlworld.com

THIS SUNDAY'S SERVICES: The 9:30am service at St Nicholas will be a service of the Word. The service at St Mary's Graveley at 11:30am, will include sharing the LORD's Supper. The talks this week will focus on Jesus' words of judgment and invitation- as Jesus has harsh words for the towns that rejected him, but a wonderfully gracious invitation to all those seeking God. The main reading will be Matthew 11: 20-30. Why not read it before you come.

If you are yet to book in, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/ohBza5JioXMdybop8> If you're not able to make it, do make sure you join us either live on Facebook or catch up later.

ARE YOU BEING CALLED TO SERVE IN THESE WAYS?

CHURCH CLEANERS: Just one or two more people or pairs needed to join the rota of those cleaning inside the worship space at St Nicholas Church? (email Stephen.bamford@talktalk.net) or the rota to clean the kitchen, toilets and parish rooms? (contact Judy on mrsvicar16@gmail.com) Each clean should take no longer than 2 hours- and it should work out to be no more than once every 4-6 weeks.

PPT and SOUND: more volunteers required to join the team operating the AV system on Sunday morning at St Nicholas. Please contact Anthony Taylor for more information: anthonyjtaylor@btinternet.com.

There will be a further short update on Friday. Until then, may God bless you and your families.

Yours in Christ,

Dave