

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Reflection 4

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever! Amen."

We know that our heavenly Father will never be the cause of our temptation. James 1:13-14, says quite clearly *"When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.'*

So what did Jesus mean when he tells us to pray "lead us not into temptation?" Temptation it seems is inevitable but it is certainly not a sin to be tempted. Even Jesus was tempted although he never succumbed to the wiles of Satan. Jesus was very aware of the work and influence of Satan.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus told Peter to *"Pray that you will not fall into temptation."* Jesus knows that Satan is strong, cagey and active. That is why we are warned in Ephesians 6:10-13 *"to put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*

The Biblical message is clear. There are many references to Satan in the New Testament. Satan exists and his work is to cause us to deny our faith. He wants the children of God to cast their faith in Jesus aside, to worship him and he will resort to any means to cause this to happen.

However, we also know that the Father will not allow us to be tempted beyond our endurance. 1 Corinthians 6:13 says, *"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."*

If we look at how Jesus himself dealt with the evil one we will see that he used the very words of God himself to disarm Satan. We have these same words in the Bible and we can use them. James 4:7 says, *"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

We can also use the prayers of those with whom we confide our need to resist the evil one. James 5:17-18 *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."*

"For yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever! Amen."

What a triumphant ending to this prayer! Despite the fact that it doesn't actually appear in the earliest versions we have of Matthew it remains in our liturgy.

Doxologies were a common practice found in most Jewish prayers. Jewish prayers tended to begin with praise to God and end with praise to God. So it is not surprising that the early church added these words to the Lord's Prayer to complete it.

The final words that we say each Sunday when we pray the Lord's Prayer as members of God's family can be found in 1 Chronicles 29:11 as a prayer of King David. *"Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendour, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."*

Questions to reflect on:

1. In the musical "My Fair Lady" Mr Doolittle sings, "The Lord above gave liquor for temptation, to see if man could turn away from sin, but with a little bit o'luck, with a little bit o'luck, when temptation comes you'll give right it." Why do you think it is so easy for us to give in to temptation than to stand firm in our faith?
2. It is not a sin to be tempted. It is sinful to give in to temptation that causes us to deny or belittle our faith. What can we do to prevent ourselves from succumbing to temptation? The following verses might help you work this out: 1 Corinthians 6:13; Ephesians 6:10-13; James 5:16-18; Matthew 4:1-8
3. By saying the words "Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever! Amen," we are committing ourselves to life in the Kingdom of God. We are submitting ourselves to his rule and acknowledging his great power. We are acknowledging that all glory and honour are his? How can we reflect this acknowledgement in our lives?
4. "Yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever! Amen." Do you think this is a fitting doxology for the Lord's Prayer? If so, why?