

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are
Most Surely Believed Among Us
An Expository Study of the Gospel According to Luke
Chapter 22- Luke 22:39-46
333- Pray That You May Not Enter Into Temptation

October 23, 2016

Luke 22:39-46

39 And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him.

40 When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "**Pray that you may not enter into temptation.**"

41 And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray,

42 saying, "**Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.**"

43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.

44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

45 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow,

46 and said to them, "**Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.**"

To the Glory of God

Now the Bible contains Passages that we often handle very lightly. We read over them very quickly thinking that they are not of *first* importance. But the Passage that Brother Andy just read to you is *not* one of those Passages. This Passage is of *great* importance; *Infinite* importance. In fact, this Passage is of such great importance that it cries out to us today,

Exodus 3:5

remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

This Passage silences us; it makes us grimace. There is no laughter here; no shallowness; no foolishness. The endless pandering of the modern prima donna pied pipers toward the baseness of human fallenness dies right here. The carnality of such popular teachings such as "our rights in Christ" and "material prosperity" and "physical healing" that has *mesmerized* the people of the modern Church ends right here with *this* agony, with *this* prayer, with *this* Man in *this* Garden.

It is important because I say to you that without *this* prayer and *this* agony of Jesus here in *this* Garden there would have been no Cross. And that means that there would have been no Propitiation for the Wrath of God that burns hot against us. And that means there would have been no Salvation for our wicked souls. *That* is how important this Passage is.

We find this Account is in each of the first three Gospels (**Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, Luke 22:39-46**), which indicates that both God the Holy Spirit and the human writers understood that this event was of great importance.

No less than the "Prince of Preachers", Charles H. Spurgeon, wrote of this Passage:

"Here we come to the Holy of Holies of our Lord's life on earth. This is a mystery like that which Moses saw when the bush burned with fire, and was not consumed. No man can rightly expound such a passage as this; it is a subject for prayerful, heart-broken meditation, more than for human language."¹

William Barclay said:

"Surely this is a passage we must approach upon our knees."²

And D. A. Carson declared:

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1987), 384

² William Barclay, *Commentary on Matthew*, 26

“As his death was unique, so also was his anguish; and our best response to it is hushed worship.”³

And so we are to look at this Passage. We are to behold it in awed respect so that we may be moved to prayerful awe, and bow before God in hushed worship.

Now the scene here in this Garden really began back in **John 13:25-32**, so please go there with me, **John 13:25-32**:

25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"

26 Jesus then answered, "**That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.**" So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot.

27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "**What you do, do quickly.**"

28 Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him.

29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor.

30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

31 Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "**Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;**

32 if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.

So while reclining at the Table as Satan was entering into Judas' heart to betray Him, Jesus said:

John 13:31b-32

31 ... "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;

32 if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.

³ DA Carson, *Explanation of Gethsemane*

Now I have a question. Why does Jesus say that He is glorified and that God is glorified in Him at the very moment when Satan is at his highest and most effective attack against Him? Wouldn't it have been better if Judas had *not* betrayed the Lord? Wouldn't it have been better if Jesus had been received and worshipped and adored and exalted and loved by the people rather than rejected and hated and despised and murdered? What is going on here? Why is both God and Jesus glorified when Jesus is just about to go into the hardest agony that He had while on the earth? This is similar to what God, Himself, said in **The Revelation 12:10**:

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

The Apostle John writes here that at the very moment when the devil has been thrown down to the earth, which is what *begins* all of our troubles and all of our temptations, and the very Fall itself in the Garden of Eden, and all the evil and wickedness and crime and poverty and war and injustice and rebellion that flowed out from that, it was at *that* moment that God would say:

Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come...

... seriously? At our *worst* moment, at the very moment of the *beginning* of all our trouble, *that* is the time for God to celebrate? Yes, because God's Ways are not like our ways. Because God is wiser and infinitely gracious; what appears to be the single worst thing that could happen to us is actually the beginning of our eternal Redemption and everlasting Joy.

And this horrific scene here in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus is literally collapsing on the ground in agonizing prayer, is actually the beginning of the most vivid display of the Glory of the Grace of God that the world has ever or will ever see.

Now, the Apostle John calls this location of this amazing scene a "garden", in fact, John says that this garden was:

John 18:1b

... over the ravine of the Kidron ...

... which was just outside of the city limits of Jerusalem. Both the Apostle Levi and John Mark tell us that this garden was called "Gethsemane". That name actually comes from an Aramaic word "Gad-Smane", which means: "oil press". So there were olive trees there, and it was a place where men took the olives and crushed them to get the oil. In fact, there are still olive trees there to this day, and one of those olive trees is almost 1,000 years old.

Now there is an extra-biblical legend that suggests that the Garden of Gethsemane, and the oil business in it, was owned by a believer of Jesus who allowed Jesus to go into his garden at night during the evenings of the last week of His Life so He could rest and hide from the religious authorities, who by this time were actively looking to have Jesus murdered.

But Dr. Luke simply calls the Garden of Gethsemane "**the place**" (**Luke 22:40**), probably because his Gospel Record was written *after* both Matthew and Mark, and so he had no need to identify it.

Now even though Jesus has been retreating to this Garden all week by Himself, Luke tells us, that on *this* late Thursday evening or early Friday morning, Jesus takes the remaining eleven disciples with Him. And Jesus leaves eight of the eleven at the entrance of the Garden and tells them:

Luke 22:40b

... Pray that you may not enter into temptation.

But He takes Peter, James, and John *further* into the Garden with Him and initially confides in them:

Matthew 26:38b

... My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.

Now other English translators use terms like "terrible distress and misery" and "crushed with anguish" which give us further insight into this scene. And this is similar to the language used by King David in **Psalm 22:14** where he prophesied concerning Jesus, and said:

I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.

... so the very essence of Jesus' Life is being **"poured out like water"** here in this Garden, and His Heart is **"melted within"** Him.

Now **"keeping watch"** was a military term that was used for men who were tasked with the responsibility of watching for the enemy during the night, usually along the walls of a city. And these men would stand on the walls and not sleep all night and would look out to see if the enemy was approaching.

Now there are two things that make this statement by Jesus unique. First of all, this is the first time that the incarnate God is actually asking sinful human beings to pray with Him. And again, simply reading these words doesn't give us the urgency of this Command. Jesus is in such an agony here that He is near death. His Face is pained with anguish; His demeanor is deadly serious; He is bent over with crushing pressure.

And Peter, James, and John have never seen Jesus like this. They weren't with Jesus as He fasted 40 days and confronted satan in the wilderness, but they are here to see this and have no idea what to say, and they sure don't know what to do.

And, in this condition, the Savior looks at these bewildered men and He speaks to them in serious tones,

... My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me

"Pray with Me!" "Don't sleep; don't get distracted; don't let your mind wander; don't get diverted! Pray!" Now this is *the* single most important moment that these men have ever experienced in their entire lives. And keep in mind that Jesus didn't bring these three men here for *His* Benefit, but for *theirs*. Jesus already knows that every single one of these men will fail this night in what He commands them to do. But, He also knows that in their failure, a great victory will come forth. And so at *the* single most important and critical juncture of His Ministry, what is Jesus telling them to do? Pray!

And secondly, by combing the military term “watch” in conjunction with prayer tells us that Jesus is telling these men to be alert and fervent and earnest in praying for Him. Now John Marks tells us that Jesus:

Mark 14:35b

... went a little beyond *them* ...

... but Dr. Luke says:

Luke 22:41b

... He withdrew from them about a stone's throw ...

... which was about 50-60 feet, the distance an average man could throw an average rock.

So Jesus brought all eleven disciples with Him to the Garden, and left eight at the edge of the Garden and told them to pray so they would not enter into temptation. He then took three of His closet men some distance into the Garden with Him and confided to them that the grief that was on Him was so great that He was near death, and gave these trusted men the earnest Command to pray hard and not sleep. And then Jesus Himself went into the center of the Garden alone.

Now I want to make sure that you understand what is going on here. It was not like Jesus had ever experienced grief or distress before over sin and death, and over the isolation from His heavenly Father they would bring. Jesus *always* knew that He had come to earth to suffer and die for the sins of the world.

But the *climax* of His anguish is now beginning to intensify as never before, as Jesus is actually *becoming* sin in our place, and His consequent separation from His Father draws near. Jesus' very soul was both grieved and repulsed by the fact that He had to be made sin. So Jesus was *not* grieving because of the physical pain He would have to endure, but rather because of having to take upon Himself the full magnitude and defilement of all the iniquity of all of God's elect, and that prospect was beyond description or understanding.

Now there is a very deep and desolate kind of loneliness that began to sweep over Jesus at this point that caused Him to be severely distressed, a loneliness that no other human could experience. The Son

of God, Who eternally communed with the Father and the Holy Spirit and with all the holy angels of heaven, would find Himself forsaken by His Father as He became sin. He would be so identified with iniquity that the hosts of Heaven would have to turn their backs on Him. And the same sin that repulsed them, repulsed Him, the sinless, holy, pure, and undefiled Son of Righteousness.

And, as the mortal Son of Man, the immortal Son of God had to also take death itself upon Himself, and that, too, was grievous and depressing beyond measure. And this caused the Savior inexpressible torment. And so Jesus' prayer here is a desperate cry. He is trying to find a way to fulfill His Father's Plan *without* having to become sin, and without being separated from God. And so, Dr. Luke describes it like this:

Luke 22:42

Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.

Now we must remember that before Jesus, *nobody* called God "Father". Abraham didn't, Moses didn't, and neither did David. In Jewish understanding, to call someone your "father" meant that you *proceeded* or "came forth" from him. And that meant that you were of the same *substance*; the very same *essence* as the one from whom you had proceeded. So, for Jesus to call the one, true, living God "Father" meant that He came forth or proceeded from God, and that He was of the very same substance and essence of God, making Jesus to be Deity.

And that is exactly what Jesus said about Himself in **John 8:42**:

"If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

... and that is exactly what the Christian Church has confessed for 2,000 consecutive years. One of the ancient written summary statements of the Christian Faith, the Nicene Creed, states that Jesus is:

God of God
Light of Light
Very God of very God
Begotten, not made
Being of one substance with the Father
By whom all things were made.⁴

So, Jesus confounded the religious hypocrites of His day by calling God "Father" all the time, which showed His unique Relationship with Him. Now the Apostle Levi says that, in this intense agonizing prayer, Jesus cried out:

My Father...

... while John Mark says that Jesus cried out:

Abba! Father!

... which shows an even *deeper* and more *intimate* Relationship.

So Jesus tells these three men that He is "deeply grieved" to the point of death. Now the Greek word here is where we get our English word "periphery" from. And so the grief and anguish that Jesus is experiencing here is completely *surrounding* Him. In fact, it is *consuming* Him. So Jesus' solitary prayer is a groan and an agony and a desperate cry to His Father. Now look again at **Luke 22:43-44:**

43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.

44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

Now the English word "agony" here had to be *created* to describe the intense pressure and grief and distress that Jesus was going through right here. The King James says that Jesus was "in an agony". And the Greek word has to do with "inner tension indicating the 'supreme Concentration of powers' in face of imminent decisions or disasters."⁵ This is not

⁴ (from Creeds of the Church, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

⁵ (from Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Copyright © 1972-1989 By Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. All rights reserved.)

fear of death, but an overwhelming concern for victory in face of the approaching decisive battle on which the fate of the world depends. Hence it is not to be compared with other more common types of agony.⁶

And that is why God dispatched an angel to Jesus to strengthen Him. *Nobody* had ever prayed like this before. Luke tells us that Jesus prayed so intently, so earnestly, so fervently, in such an agony, that:

His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

Now for many years I didn't understand this. How is this possible that someone could pray so hard, so earnestly that he would sweat blood? I have prayed so long and so hard that my clothes were literally dripping with sweat, but I have never sweat blood.

But, in the mid 1980's, as my daughter, Joy, was dying with leukemia, I saw it myself. Part of the procedure that my sweet little girl went through was when they had to periodically take bone marrow samples. And the only way to do that was to drive a very large needle into her hip bone so they could test it.

Now, in addition to having non-lymphocytic leukemia, my baby was mentally impaired and didn't understand what they were doing, and so she resisted. So they had to strap her to a plastic board in order to perform the test. And, of course, that only made her resist all the more. And I would try to whisper and sing in her ear and stroke her head to comfort her, but the pain was great and she screamed so loud and was in such pain that she actually ruptured the tiny surface blood vessels in her face, and she literally "sweated" blood. It is a phenomenon called *hematidrosis*. And I can tell you that her pain, and the fact that I couldn't help her was an agony beyond words to my soul. Many times I would fall to my knees in anguish. So, Dr. Luke tells us that Jesus was praying so intently and was in such an agony that He literally "sweated" Blood.

Now the huge difference between what my child went through and what Jesus went through is that my child's "blood sweat" was very tiny and very minimal. But Jesus's sweating of His Blood was so much that Dr. Luke said that it literally was dropping on the ground. The King James phrased it as "great drops of blood". Also, my child was dying

⁶ Ibid

with a vicious disease and it was the treatment, itself, that was designed to help her, that was causing her the physical pain.

But Jesus was *not* dying of a disease and He was *not* being treated by doctors. Jesus' Agony had *nothing* to do with suffering from a disease. Jesus was agonizing in prayer over the fact that the only way He could fulfill His Father's Plan of Redemption was to be made sin and have His Father abandon Him. Jesus was going to die to save our souls from God's Wrath.

Now we need to stop here and consider something very important. God never *forced* Jesus to die on the Cross. Jesus knew God's Will and *willingly* submitted to it. So, in every phase of His earthly Ministry, Jesus understood God's Will, and then gladly, joyfully, fully, without any hesitation, yielded Himself to do God's Will. But, in order for God's Plan to be fulfilled here meant two unthinkable things to Jesus:

- A. Jesus had to become pure sin.
- B. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit had to separate Themselves from Jesus.

... two things that had never happened before. And that is why Jesus is agonizing in prayer here. We need to remember that Jesus was totally sinless, *totally*. It is important to understand that the only reason we can enter into Heaven and stand in God's Presence without being eviscerated is because we go there in Jesus' Name, and we stand there covered in Jesus' Blood, draped with Jesus' Righteousness. And Jesus has both Blood and Righteousness to give because He fulfilled His Father's Law perfectly and continuously, 24 hours every day and seven days every week, and because He willingly submitted to God's Will right here in this Garden as a result of this prayer, and Jesus became sin for us and died with that sin on Himself.

While it was His Death on the Cross and His shed Blood that forgives our sin, it is His Righteous Life that provides us with Righteousness. And so while we marvel at His Death, we must also stand amazed over the fact that Jesus never lusted. We should gape over the reality that Jesus never coveted. We should fall before our King and worship Him because Jesus never lied. We should marvel because Jesus never said or did anything wrong. Ever. Jesus' Name should be admired and honored and adored and exalted through our

words and our songs and our thoughts and our actions because Jesus never had a bad attitude, not even for a millisecond.

Jesus loved His Father perfectly, and Jesus loved His chosen followers perfectly. Jesus never had a sinful impulse; He had no fallen nature; Jesus had no inclination to love darkness rather than light. And the only way that Jesus could fulfill His Father's Plan was by becoming pure sin and have God the Father separate from Him, and that had never happened before. John's Gospel Record tells us this in **John 1:1-2:**

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God.

... so from eternity past, Jesus has *always* been in God's Presence. God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit enjoy *perfect* harmony and perfect *unity* and perfect *love* and perfect *joy* in the inter-Trinitarian Glory, 24 hours every day and seven days every week. There is *never* a moment when the three Persons of the one Biblical God are not "with" one another, until now.

Now we struggle to get into God's Presence. And we struggle because of what the Prophet said in **Isaiah 59:2:**

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear.

So, for any fallen and sinful human being to be in God's Presence at all, in any aspect, is a wonder that is almost unthinkable. For any of us to stand in the same proximity of God, Who is infinite Glory and infinite Beauty and infinite Righteousness and infinite Majesty and infinite Power and infinite Goodness, requires a dead and risen Savior. *Nobody* stands in God's Presence because of their own merit or their own purity. For any of us to be into God's Presence uncovered by both the shed Blood of Jesus and His pristine Righteousness would require God the Father to annihilate us in a moment.

We also know what Jesus Himself said about the relationship that He and the Father have from what He said in **John 17:5, 21, 24:**

5 "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

24 "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

So Jesus and the Father and the Spirit enjoy *perfect* glory, *perfect* singleness, and *perfect* love. And yet, the only way that Jesus can fulfill His Father's Will here is to become what the Father hates the most, sin.

Now even though it only takes a few seconds to read through this Passage, Jesus' prayer was quite lengthy. And even though I think it was here in this Garden that Jesus prayed His High Priestly Prayer of **John 17** at this time, even that doesn't take that long to read through. The few words that are given to us are simply to help us get the impact of His Prayer and do not constitute His full time with God. I personally believe that this time in prayer lasted for several hours.

But at some point during this amazing Prayer, Jesus manages to get up and stagger toward His three closet men who He has strictly told to not fall asleep, but to pray earnestly or to "keep watch". And even though these rugged fishermen were used to fishing all night long, even though they made their living by staying up all night pulling their net through the waters of the Sea of Galilee, even though sleep had never been an issue with them before, *this* night, on the *only* night that Jesus called on them to pray with Him, they picked *this* night to fail in their mission and go to sleep.

Now this is incredible! And even though many commentators go into great lengths to say how tired these men must have been due to all the energy they had spent on that particular day, and of how normal it is to be sleepy at that time of the night, I don't buy that for a second. And I don't accept that for four huge reasons:

1. They were used to staying up all night long.
2. This was not a normal night.
3. Jesus had specifically told them not to go to sleep.

But, the main reason I don't buy it is because Dr. Luke told us why they went to sleep.

Luke 22:45

When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow,

Dr. Luke tells us that these three men disobeyed Jesus' Command to pray, and they failed God at the most crucial moment in Jesus' entire earthly Ministry because of "sorrow"! What? What does that mean?

Luke tells us that these men did not fall asleep because they were tired or because they had had a long day or because they were exhausted over everything that had transpired that day. No. The infallible Word of the living God tells us that these men fell asleep:

"from sorrow"

So it was *sorrow* that caused their eyes to be heavy. Now this doesn't make much sense to me. And so, in order to figure this out, I consulted with a very good Greek dictionary. Now right off "jump street", you need to know that all dictionaries are not created equal. You can buy a dictionary at Wal-Mart for about 5 bucks that is about three inches thick, and has some pretty good definitions in it. But if you buy the full Oxford Dictionary, that costs about \$500 dollars, and it is about four foot thick. And the difference is not that the cheap dictionary from Wal-Mart is wrong, it is just woefully incomplete. The editors simply eliminated all but the most common definitions. And so, the cheap dictionary doesn't give you the fullest or even the best information.

And there is a Greek dictionary that is very good. And it is good because it isn't cheap and it isn't cheap because it is full. It is the ten-volume "Kittel's Greek Dictionary". And this dictionary not only gives you the meaning of the words as they appear in the Bible, but it also goes *outside* the Bible to other literature that was published in the first Century to give you the best and the fullest meaning of what the average person who lived in the first Century would think when he heard that particular word used.

And it is from that Greek Dictionary that we see that some of the deeper meanings of the word "sorrow" would be: sadness and unhappiness; misery, despondency; and regret; depression and despair; dejection and gloom; woe and heartache; and even grief.

So, what was going on with these men that they were sad and unhappy? Why were they miserable and despondent? Why were Jesus' closet men in despair and gloom? Why were they experiencing heartache and grief? Why was Peter, James and John sorrowful?

Was it because Jesus was about to die? Were they sleeping because they were *depressed*? And, if so, what were they depressed about? Was it some great *regret* that was causing them to disobey Jesus Command here?

I think that in order to understand this, we need to try to get into the minds of these men. Every single one of these men had been taught from their childhood that the Jews were "God's chosen people". And they were looking for a Messiah to come one day to "save" them. But the "salvation" that these men were initially looking for was *not* to be saved from the Wrath of God. No, the Jews believed that they were in right standing with God by birth, through their physical lineage to "Father Abraham". And so, to them, being "saved" was to be physically and militarily delivered from the pagans who were occupying their land and brutalizing them every day.

They were looking for a warrior, Messiah, a conquering military commander who would mobilize a great following of Jewish warriors who would vanquish the Roman army and restore Israel to its former Glory. This Messiah would then enter into Jerusalem as the conquering hero and march down main street on a white stallion, and enter the palace and sit down in the throne of King David and rule the world with a rod of iron.

And Peter, James, and John had been with Jesus now from the very beginning of His earthly Ministry. And they had seen Jesus perform countless miracles and speak amazing words. They had watched Jesus raise the dead and cast out demons, and even be transfigured before them. But they had *never* seen Jesus like this. They had never seen Him be overwhelmed with grief and anguish. They had never seen Him bent over with a burden so heavy it was killing Him. They had heard Jesus pray a thousand times before, but never like this. And this shook these men to the core of their being.

Jesus had *always* had all the answers; He was *always* strong, *always* on top of everything. Jesus had *never* wilted, even in the face of intense persecution. He had stared down the most powerful men in the entire nation. They had heard Him speak amazing Truth. They had even seen Him shine with the Glory of God with their own eyes.

But now, just 50 feet away, their King had fallen on His Face to the dust and He was crying out to God, "*My Father! Let this cup pass from Me!*" And this strong, wise, glorious Master was now weak and vulnerable, *seemingly* at the point of backing up on everything He had told them. And I really think that this scene offended these men. And it offended them to the point where they were really wondering what they had gotten themselves into.

Now I think it is very important to understand the mindset of these men. Not only was Jesus *not* afraid of dying, these men weren't either. They were absolutely willing to stand with Jesus up to this point because they honestly believed in Who He was and in what He was teaching. And they were willing to go all the way, including dying for this man. At least they thought they were.

Now in the back of their minds, if not in the very forefront, these men realized that by hitching their wagon to Jesus meant they were getting into real serious trouble with the "powers that be". They knew that by bucking tradition they were angering a whole lot of very important people.

And they didn't mind doing that, because they had an "ace in the hole". These men were perfectly willing to go all the way with Jesus because they knew that Jesus had great supernatural Power and Authority. And when things got real tough, they knew that Jesus could just speak the word and all their enemies would be destroyed. Mortal men were no match for Jesus, because they had watched Him for over three years tie the most learned lawyers in knots, and get out of one jam right after another.

But now, they sense a real weakness in their leader; they see Jesus that night in a completely different light. They see Him bent over with a pained expression on His Face. They can literally see the burden on His Shoulders. And they hear a Man, that they considered to be the incarnate God, beg them to pray for Him, something He had never done before.

And the last straw was when they saw their invincible King fall on His Face and cry out to God in desperation just 50 feet away. And these men began to wonder. And their confidence that Jesus was actually going to be able and pull this off and establish His Kingdom began to falter. Their faith that Jesus was able to protect them from all the enemies they had made during the last three and half years began to slip. Their belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, began to be challenged like never before. And *this* was the “temptation” that Jesus told them to pray against. Everybody celebrates Jesus when He is healing them and feeding them and blessing them. The crowds are large when Jesus is handing out “spiritual candy”. But when things go south, who will believe? When things are not working at all like you think they should, will you remain faithful? When everything seems to fall apart, will you continue to trust?

And so, I think *two* things were going on here. First, there was a tremendous foreboding that began to set in on these men. They began to see Jesus as weak and unable to actually do what they thought Messiah was supposed to do, overcome the pagan Romans and bring the glory back to Israel that they had enjoyed under King David. And as they watched Jesus agonizing in prayer, they had no clue that His Concern was about becoming Sin and of being separated from His Father. All they saw was weakness, and a Man who was, at that moment, completely unable to establish anything. And so they began to think to themselves, *“Uh oh, what have we gotten ourselves into? We have spent the last three years making enemies out of the most powerful people in the country and now this guy is going to falter? What are we going to do now? I didn’t sign up for this. I thought this was going to get better and better, not end like this!”*

Now one hint that this is exactly what these men were thinking is found over in **The Acts 1:6**, when *after* the Crucifixion, and *after* the Resurrection, and *after* Jesus had spent 40 days teaching them about the Kingdom of God, just minutes before Jesus was going to ascend up into heaven they asked Him:

Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?

... which shows that even at *this* point, these men, who would go on to change the world, still didn't have a clue how all this was going to pan out.

And so, as they saw Jesus agonizing in prayer and misunderstanding what it was all about, these men entered into deep depression and had serious second thoughts about the whole thing. And it was almost a fatal resignation that came over them, a depressed realization that they had traveled three years and hitched their wagon with the wrong star, and now they were stuck. And I think they just basically gave up at this point. And their profound *disappointment* with Jesus at this moment caused this "sorrow" which fueled their *inability*, and really, their *unwillingness* to obey Jesus and stay awake and pray. And each of these three men said to themselves, "*What's the use? What's the sense in us continuing to believe at this point? I mean our Leader is over there with His Face in the dust, obviously He is afraid of what's coming. And if He's like that, we have no hope. As soon as the authorities see Him like this, they're going to kill us all.*" And so, in this deep disillusionment and sorrow, they laid down and went to sleep.

But I think something else is going on here as well. This moment had never happened before and would never happen again. The spiritual darkness and the intense spiritual pressure in this Garden must have been intense. It must have been overwhelming. In fact, it was stifling, and so thick you could feel it and cut it with a knife. And I really don't think these men understood what was happening here, and so it overwhelmed them. And I think that was part of the picture as well.

Now Jesus found that all three of them disobedient and sleeping, but He only rebukes Peter, once again showing that Peter was the leader among all the Apostles, and He says to Peter:

Mark 14:37b-38

37 ... "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?"

38 "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And then John Mark tells us:

Mark 14:39-41

39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words.

40 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

41 And He came the third time, and said to them, "**Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.**

Three times Jesus came and found His closet men sleeping after He had specifically told them *not* to sleep, but to watch and pray with Him. Two times He rebukes them and *re-enforces* His Call for them to pray and not to enter into the very temptation that they were experiencing right then to doubt Him and to give up hope. Dr. Luke tells us that the second time, Jesus told them:

Luke 22:46

Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation

But the third time, John Mark tells us that Jesus said:

“It is enough”

... and this phrase shows us that Jesus had regained His composure and was now fully submitted to carrying out His Father's Will, including the unthinkable, to literally become sin and be separated from His Father.

Now what can we learn from this amazing scene? I think several things:

We must also understand that our weak flesh is very powerful in opposing our willing spirit's intentions and resolve to follow Jesus in the obedience of faith. And fighting those inclinations is a daily struggle. So what, exactly, do we prayerfully watch for to escape the power of our weak flesh?

It is a great paradox that we often experience the weakness of our flesh in the strength of its sinful cravings and compulsions. It's maddening because our flesh frequently demands to think or do things

other than what we should be thinking or doing at the moment. These range from mildly distracting to disturbingly dark like:

- ✓ When, like the disciples, we should be watching and praying, our flesh really wants to sleep.
- ✓ When we should be sleeping, our flesh finds Facebook browsing fascinating.
- ✓ When we should be diligently teaching our children, our flesh would love to watch a relaxing, even “family-friendly” movie.
- ✓ When we should be meditating on Scripture, our flesh becomes a fountain of ideas for reorganizing the room, improving the yard, or critiquing the political candidate.
- ✓ When we should be focusing on our work, our flesh brings up that focus-dominating fear.
- ✓ When we should be cutting our calories, our flesh demands a sugar-laced snack.
- ✓ When we should be eating because we’ve become undernourished due to believing lies about how our weight relates to our value, our flesh screams shame-filled things to stop us.
- ✓ When we should be relishing the joy and freedom of sexual purity and fidelity, our flesh desires to imagine or look at defiling, lewd images.
- ✓ When we should be humbly resisting premature conclusions regarding a potentially offensive concern or comment, our flesh immediately turns defensive and suspicious, proposing fantasy scenarios that will indulge sinful anger with a feeling of righteous indignation.

The exasperation of this experience made Paul cry out:

Romans 7:24

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

... and if it weren't for God's Grace toward us, our flesh would hold us enslaved.

But in Christ, God sets us free not only from the *penalty* of our sin, but also from the *power* of our sin that remains very active in our flesh:

Romans 8:3-4

3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Word became flesh in order to be condemned in our place for our sin. And in doing so, Jesus paid the full penalty of our guilt. And then Jesus gives us His Spirit to empower us to walk in the “newness of life” so that we no longer are enslaved to the cravings and compulsions of our flesh.

Sin-penalty paid, Spirit-power imparted, and the kingdom inherited, all because our King is so gracious and lavishly generous. What a gospel!

But because our weak, sin-infected flesh still seeks to powerfully influence us away from the Gospel, Jesus commands us to “watch and pray”. Watch and pray for what? We watch and pray for the Holy Spirit.

We are not to be “filled with the Spirit” every day in the sense that a glass is filled with water. No, we are to be “filled” every day in the sense of being empowered, and enabled, and controlled. The New Covenant is all about redeemed souls no longer being *driven* by our carnal fleshly lusts, but being “led” by God’s Spirit. And the Spirit “leads” us into Truth by speaking to us the Word of Christ. The flesh “drives” us by carnal and selfish desires. And only Jesus has the Words of eternal life. That’s why “**it is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing**” (John 6:63). And that’s also why Paul tells us:

Galatians 5:16-17

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

And that’s also why Paul says:

Romans 8:13-14

13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

God's children are those who follow the leading of God's Spirit by heeding Jesus's living Word (**Hebrews 4:12; John 6:68**). They do not sleep, but they "**stay on the alert**" (**Mark 13:37**), praying in the Holy Spirit, and watching for the Spirit (**Ephesians 6:18**). Now we don't do all this perfectly yet. But, though stumbling at times, we walk by faith in Jesus's Words and not by the sight of our fleshly cravings (**2 Corinthians 5:7**).

So when it comes to resisting the powerful demands of our weak flesh, the Bible describes it as a kind of "dying". That's because our deceived, corrupt flesh believes our life will be happier if we gratify it. So denying it can feel like dying to something life-giving.

So we must be reminded every day that "**nothing good dwells in [us], that is, in [our] flesh**" (**Romans 7:18**). When we, in following the Spirit's direction, die to our flesh, we are dying only to what would destroy us, things like "sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness" (**Colossians 3:5**). So all we are really dying to- is death. And that kind of dying is worth dying every day (**1 Corinthians 15:31**). For in such dying, we choose life (**Deuteronomy 30:19**).

So when our weak flesh seems to wield great power through its sinful cravings and compulsions, especially during very serious and important times, we must "**watch and pray that we enter not into temptation**" for greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. (**1John 4:4**). All that our sinful flesh will manifest- is death. But **if, by the Spirit, we are putting to death the deeds of the flesh- we will live** (**Romans 8:13**).

So beginning this very day, when you struggle with your own unruly flesh, remember this: You will never die when you die to your flesh. So when you die to your flesh, you are actually choosing life! So choose life, and live!

Amen. Let's pray

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.