

## Fighting Temptation: *Blood, Sweat, and Tears in Prayer* Luke 22:39-46

**Introduction:** Part of parenthood is preparing children for an inevitable future, which means part of motherhood is giving advice. In honor of Mother's Day, these are pieces of advice that moms wish they had received before they became a mom (from the blog *scarymommy.com*):

- It's ok to admit motherhood isn't fun -- that you're exhausted and that you resent your husband because he gets to go out into the world while you wipe noses and bums for a living
- Don't sweat the small stuff --and unless your child has a serious illness, it's all small stuff.
- Take time to take a shower
- You don't need a diaper Genie or a wipe warmer
- Don't compare yourselves to others
- Sometimes you feel like throwing them out of window...and that's ok, but don't actually do it
- Don't judge other parents...they have no idea what they are doing either
- Don't take things too seriously...you won't completely mess your kids up by missing a vegetable, a nap, a bath, if they fall asleep in their clothes, or get away with things once in a while
- Let them get messy
- The parents who look like they have it all together are almost always a bigger mess than you
- Pick your battles
- Relax - you're doing a better job than you think

Advice for the future is helpful, but only if it is heeded. We come to a time in the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus is going to equip His disciples with the inevitability of temptation coming in their future. He had prepared them in the upper room with the symbol of the Passover meal, had told them they would all fall away but that He'd be praying for them, and now He was going to command and demonstrate the need to pray in the present for the surety of the future. So He took them to a customary place, to a solitary Garden where in the cool quiet of the evening they could get down to the hard work of prayer.

### **Command to Pray when Facing Inevitable Temptation** (39-40; 46)

**Luke 22:39-40** And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup> And when he came to the place, he said to them, "**Pray that you may not enter into temptation...**

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

### **Prayers Purpose**

**Why do we pray? What is the point and purpose?** The answer to these questions is not only essential to a life seeking to please the Lord, but our *practice of prayer* will reveal what we really believe. Prayer is one of those aspects of our life that is a perpetual struggle, the discipline that is so easily neglected or given token participation. Our prayer can be compared to the experience of a foxhole in war (there are no atheists in foxholes), or a belief that God is a genie in a bottle, or that God is waiting to answer our requests of **more material and better medical care**. In other words, we only pray when we are desperate, we treat God like an on-demand dispenser, and we primarily pray for physical wants and health. Is that what prayer is truly for?

Jesus had prayed right before this that He had given His followers **eternal life**, and then went on to describe eternal life as the **quality of knowing God and Jesus** rather than a destination to obtain (John

17:3). We are to **seek FIRST His kingdom and His righteousness** (Matt. 6:33) rather than all the other things we are wrapped up in (food, clothes, longer life). Our greatest worth is knowing Christ Jesus our Lord (Phil. 3:8), our greatest benefit is to secure undivided devotion to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:35), and our greatest desire is to delight ourselves in the Lord (Ps. 37:4). Prayer is not as much about **getting from God** as it is about **getting GOD**. Prayer is a way to line our will up with God's, to conform our desires with His, to make sure that what we seek is consistent with who He is and what He wants. That is why when Jesus taught the disciples to pray (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4), the emphasis was NOT on what we could get, but on our constant **dependency** on Him.

Jesus specifically commands the disciples to pray in light of the coming temptation **not to enter, fall, or give into it**. This command was included in the model of prayer before, but now there was an immediate or urgent call since temptation was crouching at the door, ready to pounce. This means that **prayer is an essential component in the battle with temptation**. The question we must all ask at this point is: *does prayer for standing strong in the midst of temptation categorize our daily prayer?* Notice as well that Jesus has already said that He Himself is praying for the disciples (Luke 22:32), just as He makes intercession for us (Heb. 7:25; Romans 8:34). Jesus is praying for us, but that does not negate the responsibility that each of us has to pray. **What is an essential value we must have in order to make this kind of prayer a regular reality?**

### Essential Value Needed

**1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world.** If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world- **the desires of the flesh** and the **desires of the eyes** and **pride in possessions**- is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

#### ○ Hatred of sin

The gospel frees us from the **power** of sin, releasing the grip of death it once had on us and gives us freedom to obey, to walk in holiness, and to do all of this out of a motive of love, rather than duty or trying to please God by our works. We have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness and given access and hope of heaven, essentially ending any hope we have in the things of this world. This means that as we walk with Christ, we develop a growing **hatred of our own sin**, a growing distaste for the things of this world, and a growing love for God Himself. As my love for God grows, all the other things I used to idolize or pursue begin to fade, and even the gifts of God (family, jobs, abilities, vacations, etc) are simply means of knowing and worshipping Him. This is the way we are called to love our wives: *when she is the standard of beauty, all others beauties pale in comparison. As I pursue the wife of my youth, all other women become a far distance behind.* This is how we grow in our hatred of sin – when we pursue our love in God through Christ.

#### ○ Understanding of the nature of temptation

But to grow in a hatred of sin, we must understand how it works. The battle against our sin can be summarized in three categories: **lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of possession** (boastful pride of life). Notice that these three areas have an **internal and external component**: lust or pride (internal) and how we fulfill it, what we see, and what we treasure. Think about these in terms of daily temptation:

- **Lust of the flesh** – We are tempted to indulge ourselves with too much sleep, food, alcohol, or any other kinds of physical indulgence. Our god is our appetite, so we look to feed ourselves by what our desires tell us, not what is best for us.

- **Lust of the eyes** – We are tempted by what we see, indulging our desires through our eyes from a growing discontent in our present condition. This can be direct lust in pornography or indirect, desiring what others have as we scan Instagram or Facebook.
- **Pride of possession** – We value what we have, find our pleasure in those things, and base a good day or bad day on whether we increased or decreased in stuff. We drift toward independence, believing we can figure life out by ourselves, handling every situation until we can't.

You see, the nature of temptation is NOT simply staying out of “bad places”, it is IN US. Since that is the case, the battle to withstand temptation to sin is ONGOING, EVERY DAY, and RELENTLESS. We need to understand our need and the power of daily prayer if we are going to fight such a formidable foe.

### Example to Pray when Facing Inevitable Temptation (41-44)

**Luke 22:41-44** And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> saying, "**Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.**" <sup>43</sup>

And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. <sup>44</sup> And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

### Prayers Weight

**Hebrews 5:7** In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, **with loud cries and tears**, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

Now, we enter into hallowed ground. Jesus gave us an example to follow, allowing us into a holy place of He and the Father, a place even His disciples did not go. Jesus left 8 of His disciples at the entrance of the garden and brought Peter, James, and John closer to Himself (Matt. 26:36-37). They got to experience close quarters prayer with Jesus. But then He went further up and further in, a stones throw away. There He fell to the ground (Mark 14:35), fell on His face (Matt. 26:39), and prayed to His Father. It is difficult to describe what was going on in this scene, but we have some clues to this great and mysterious time.

- **Temptation was in full swing** – Jesus was no stranger to temptation. In fact, at the beginning of His public ministry He withstood the full barrage that Satan could throw at Him, even while in an emaciated condition due to extreme fasting (Luke 4:1-13). Satan's whole goal was to **keep Jesus from the cross**. He offered Jesus a kingdom without pain, fulfillment without sacrifice. Now, Satan was active again, by influencing Judas, asking to sift Peter, having an hour of darkness (Luke 22:53) where the world was turned against Jesus. Satan once again was opening every last weapon in his arsenal to dissuade or disqualify Jesus from going to the cross.
- **Temptation was real** – This temptation was not a token exercise of Nerf guns and rubber bullets. This was as real as it gets and Jesus experienced and fought against it in the same way He calls us to. When Jesus prayed for the cup to be removed from Him, this was a legitimate and real request. The "**cup**" was representative of judgment in the OT (Ps. 11:6; 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15-17, 49:12; Lam. 4:21; Ezek. 23:31-33; Hab. 2:16; Zech. 12:2). This was the prospect of facing all of what was coming: physical suffering, the horror of separation from the Father, becoming sin, and being judicially disfellowshipped from God. There is mystery here for sure. Jesus had already said many times that He was willing to lay down His life for His sheep (John 10:17), that He was going to Jerusalem to die (Luke 18:31-34), and that He would be lifted

up like the serpent in the wilderness (John 12:32). If He *knew and chose this path out of obedience and love, why would He pray for the cup to be removed?* Jesus faced temptation like us --- fully as man with the resources of the Word and Spirit ---- but from a completely different foundation. We face temptation that appeals to our sinful and fallen flesh. Jesus faced temptation out of perfection, untainted humanity, who NEVER experienced sin in any shape or form. So Satan's temptation played to this:

*“But Satan’s temptation of Christ was just the opposite. He was perfectly pure and righteous, and His absolute holiness motivated His every thought, word, and deed. While believers struggle to abandon sin and embrace holiness, Jesus struggle to set aside His holiness and embrace **sin-bearing**. He was not fighting against sinful impulses to allow Himself to be made sin for believers (2 Cor. 5:21). **Satan tempts Christians to cling to sin; he tempted Jesus to cling to holiness.**”<sup>1</sup>*

Jesus was appalled to become sin, and that means there was trepidation going to the cross. This is good news, since Jesus did not skip and frolic to the cross, but went obediently, trusting His Father, to take on the darkest hours of all eternity. This is our High Priest who understands our temptation and not only intercedes but helps us through the Spirit.

- **Temptation caused a strong, physical reaction**

Notice that just as in the temptation in the wilderness, God sent a ministering angel to comfort and strengthen Jesus. This allowed Jesus to continue on in prayer. Its amazing **how Jesus prayed**. The word for His approach to God was "**agony**", meaning there was deep angst and pain to point that His sweat became as great drops of blood. Some have disputed whether this was referencing the sweat itself, that it was massive in size, or whether Jesus face and body actually bled. The word used for drops here is the root "thrombosis", which means the clotting or coagulation of blood. It is very possible that Jesus was under such duress that His body reacted through pressure that a condition called **hematidrosis** occurred, which is the oozing of blood from the skin. What does this mean for us?

Hebrews 12:3-4 says, "**Consider Him** who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. **In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding of blood.**"

Jesus was so committed to obedience out of love, and temptation so strong, that He agonized in the **blood, sweat, and tears** required in prayer. I wonder how often we have prayed this way in **preparation for or during the midst of temptation to sin**. Have we recognized our own depravity and dependency on God, and realized the heinous nature of our sin to the degree that we have cried out in agony for God to deliver us from evil and not have us enter into temptation?

### **Essential Qualifier Needed**

**1 John 5:14-15** And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything **according to his will he hears us**.<sup>15</sup> And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

Completing the prayer, however, Jesus gave the most **essential qualifier in all of our prayer**. "Yet, not my will, by yours be done." This separates prayers driven for selfish gain from those that make much of God. "You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, to

<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, "Luke 18-24", p. 301

**spend it on your own passions."** (James 4:2-3) Jesus asked of the Father, but asked in light of accomplishing the Father's will, not His own. Jesus' goal was to glorify the Father (John 17:1-5), and knew that would be done on the cross. This is the part of prayer that if we leave out, in word or attitude, God will NOT HEAR OR ANSWER. So do we pray for healing, for a job, for financial help, for a spouse: YES. But we pray in light of God's sovereign will and grace. "Father, please heal \_\_\_\_\_, in a way that brings you glory. But do it according to your will, and if your will is to let this continue, may my will be conformed to yours and rest in your goodness and love." Does the desire to see God's will done color and shape the nature and content of our prayer?

**Failure to Pray when Facing Inevitable Temptation (45)**

**Luke 22:45** And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow,

**Prayers Struggle**

Prayer is a struggle, isn't it? At least this type of prayer. We see this in the disciples who were faced with the prospect of the greatest temptation of their lives (you will all fall away before this night is over - Matt. 26:31), with exhaustion from a busy week, and overwhelmed with despair from the knowledge of Him going to the cross that instead of running toward God, they simply went to sleep. Now, there are absolutely times where sleep is the answer, but most times prayer would be in order. I remember when Erin asked me what we were going to do after 3 years of infertility and failed treatments, what we were going to do next. I was overwhelmed with not knowing how to fix the situation that I manned up and turned over and went to sleep (terrible, terrible leadership).

The disciples are just like us, except that they got to be with Jesus and we get the Spirit indwelling in us. They failed to pray, so when they got up to face temptation, Jesus succeeded and they failed. *What are your struggles in prayer? Do you pray foxhole prayers? Do you pray once or twice and then give up? Do you pray according to your will alone?* Is it a matter of discipline? Prayer is not easy and does not just happen, so you have to be proactive by making time for it.

**Essential Understanding Needed**

**Prayerlessness is a declaration of independence.** It leaves us unprepared for the coming temptations that face us every day. It exemplifies a view of God that believes He is there to serve us instead of us making much of Him. But the reality is that we have a God who hears us, who answers us, who intercedes for us, who helps us in our deepest of sorrow and severest of temptation. We cling to the truth of **Psalm 34:17-18:**

*When the righteous call for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.  
The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*

So we are commanded and commended to pray, that God would not allow us to enter into temptation and keep us from evil. Let's engage in this type of prayer everyday.