

Lessons from the Garden

Luke 22:46

March 9, 2025

Well, we want to come back one more time to Luke 22:39-46, this passage we've been in for the last couple of weeks. We want to come back to it one more time so that we can learn the lessons that I think the Lord would have us learn, the lessons Luke as an author wants us to learn, the lessons that the Holy Spirit wants us to learn as well as we observe our Lord Jesus Christ. The particular lessons, here, learning how we can fight against temptation, fight against temptation, to resist sinning and this comes from the commands and from the example of our Lord.

The primary focus, as we've seen in this narrative, Jesus praying at the Garden of Gethsemane, is to observe his agony, to see some of what he suffered, and to give thanks for his sin-bearing on our behalf, and to worship him for all that he is and



all that he has accomplished and how he set himself apart for our sake and for the sake of God.

So we've done that over the past couple of weeks, and now we want to learn a few lessons from this passage for ourselves because this is also germane to Luke's purpose in writing. Let's go to the passage one more time and read it. We'll set it before us, and then we'll learn some lessons from it. Luke 22, starting in verse 39, "And he came out," that's coming out from the upper room, "and he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives. And the disciples also followed him. "Now when he arrived at the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not enter into temptation.'

"And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw. And he knelt down and began to pray, saying, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Yet not my will, but yours be done.' And an angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him. And being in agony, he was praying very fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground. And when he arose from prayer, he came to the disciples, found

them sleeping from sorrow. And he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'"

Entering into temptation and sinning because of temptation prevents us from doing what God has called us to do. Sin is an obstacle to us. It's a distraction. It is an off-ramp from the highway of God's will. If Jesus had been, had off-ramped from doing God's will and went into temptation and sinned, it'd completely undermine all of his purpose in being. He would not be able to accomplish our redemption on the cross.

And it's the same way for all of us. When we sin, we, we, we get distracted. We have tripped over an obstacle, we lie face-down on the ground, and we fail to do what God has actually planned for us, what he's designed us for. We don't experience the blessing and the joy of obedience. We don't actually accomplish his will. This is exactly what Jesus wants to prevent for his disciples. It's exactly why he went to the garden to pray.

So a main lesson we see from this text and for these disciples and really for all of Jesus' disciples, based on his command, based on his example, looking at their failure to obey his command, this is a main lesson from the text: Don't let sorrow compromise your obedience. We can expand it out and say don't let anything compromise your obedience. But in this text in particular, one of the most sympathetic things that we have for excusing people for not fulfilling the will of God is they were sad, broken-hearted; sorrow overcame them and they couldn't help themselves.

And so a main lesson we see here is don't let sorrow compromise your obedience. Sorrow, grief, sadness, we could even say weakness, weariness, none of these things excuse disobedience to Christ's commands. It may sound harsh to those whose ears are attuned to more therapeutic sensitivities in our age, but this is how Jesus lives. This is how he thinks and speaks and acts. He's the one who told them, as we see in Matthew 26 and Mark 14, which are also parallel accounts of Luke 22, we would see that he told them, there, "The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

And he didn't excuse disobedience just because the flesh is weak. He said, I'm making you aware that the Spirit is willing. You have every right intention, but the flesh is weak. And yet he expected them to fight against the weakness of the flesh. Whether that's a physical weakness and weariness, or it's an emotional sadness and sorrow, Jesus expected obedience. He expected obedience for his disciples then, and he expects obedience from us now.

How many of you look to your own physical infirmities, weaknesses, sadnesses, sorrows, disruptions in life and give yourself a pass because you didn't do what duty required, because you didn't give yourself to the service of one another or even just showing up to church? How many of us give ourselves a pass because of one excuse or another? Jesus expects obedience, and it's not because he's an ogre and he's harsh. It's not because he's hard. No, he is soft, gracious, kind, compassionate. And because he is compassionate and because he loves, he calls us to obedience. He calls us to obedience because the obedience is good, because it is uplifting, because it is strengthening. Disobedience decays our souls, and would prevent us from that.

You see in this text, when they did not obey him, he didn't coddle them or give them a pass. I'll also emphasize he was never harsh with them. He wasn't unkind toward them. He was never insulting, never demeaning. But because he loved them, Jesus wanted them to build their spiritual strength. He wanted them to walk strong in faith. He wanted to free them from the power of the flesh, to escape the weakness of the flesh, to not be controlled by the feelings of the emotions. And so he commanded them, as we see in the text, "'Rise up,'" which is another way of saying, Watch, keep your eyes open, your head on a swivel, and pray so that you do not enter into temptation, so that you resist temptation, so you don't sin. Sin is an obstacle. Sin is a distraction. Sin will take you down, weaken you, discourage you, sadden you.

So we see in the text here, and we're going to move through this more topically. We've done the kind of expositional, exegetical work in the past couple weeks. We're going to move this, through this session today more topically. But we see in the text that his command, here, as we've said before, is protective. It's protecting them; it's preventative,

prophylactic, you could say. He wants to keep them from failure. So he says, “Pray that you don't enter into temptation.”

When they fail to do that, we see that his rebuke is, is restorative. He repeats the same command when they fail. And then his example, which is the center point of the text and the focus, it occupies the center portion of the text and the most important portion, his example is so instructive so that we can obey his command. So to resist temptation and stand firm, obey his command, accept his rebuke, follow his example, let me give you a few points.

Here's the first point for your notes today: Obey his protective command. Obey his protective command. Jesus enters into this time of prayer in the garden before he faces his own trial, his greatest trial, the greatest trial ever known to man. But he also knows, at the same time, he's conscious, aware, watchful, that his disciples will also face testing. And so he commands him in Luke 22:40, at the beginning, before he goes off to pray, he says, “Pray that you may not enter into

temptation.'" "'Pray that you don't enter into temptation.'"

That's a protective command.

So what temptation? Where did they need protection in particular? Well, as we've already seen in the upper room, Jesus warned Peter that Satan sought permission to sift the disciples like wheat, Luke 22:31. He's referring to a, a turbulent, disorienting form of attack from Satan, which would come with a, with a violence and with a force that they had never felt before. Peter, you remember, responded with bold confidence in verse 33. But the Lord did not accept that and embrace that and say, Good job Peter, good attitude. He warned him. So "'the rooster is not going to finish crowing before you've denied me three times.'" The day won't even start before you have fallen in what you've committed to do right now. What temptation would take Peter from such a strong confidence to an absolutely vacillating and weak denial of his Savior?

They left the upper room, and on their way to the garden Jesus warned them again. We see this in Matthew 26 and Mark 14, not in Luke, he doesn't record this part, but in Matthew 26:31

he warned them on the way to the garden. He said, "'You will all fall away because of me this night.'" Then he cited the prophecy of Zechariah, "'Strike the shepherd, the sheep will scatter.'" Peter doubled down on the, on the way, again, doubled down, and the rest of the disciples joined him in this, expressing their loyalty, expressing, even then, some form of self-confidence. And that evoked Jesus second prediction of Peter's denial.

Again, how would they all shift so radically, so dramatically, from confidence to cowardice in just the space of hours? Answer: Unseen temptations would be lurking in their hearts. Unseen temptations would be seducing and enticing and presenting themselves to their hearts, to persuade them to abandon Jesus and look out for yourself. Discouragement, sorrow would lead them to unfitting thoughts, would bring them to commit cowardly, cowardly acts. So Jesus knows this is coming. He's been watchful for not only himself, but for them and on their behalf. And I'll just say to you, Christian, be watchful for yourself. Be watchful for one another. Be watchful for your, your spouse, for your children, your grandchildren, your great grandchildren. Be watchful for one another in the church. Look



out for one another, care for one another, pray for one another, warn one another.

Do we see that in the example of our Lord? Absolutely. He's watchful, seeing things that they're not seeing, and he's warning them, verbally warning them. And what an offense it would be for any of those disciples to say, how dare you question my loyalty? How dare you speak that way and question my confidence and my ability? How dare you? Are you saying I'm not a Christian? None of the disciples would dare speak that way to our Lord. And don't let any of you speak that way to one another when you hear the warning, when you hear the challenge, when you hear the concern. Take as it, take it as it's meant, as Christian love.

Unseen temptations are lurking in the hearts of these men, and Jesus knows that. He knows what's coming. He's been watching out for them, he's been praying for them, and so he commands them, join me and take up your own cause and pray. Pray. This is for your protection. "Pray that you don't enter into temptation." Now, I'll ask you just a few questions, here, to

get some clarity. What does it mean to, as Jesus has put it here, to enter into temptation? What does that expression mean? What's the difference, then, between that and falling to temptation? Are they the same thing? Are they different? More basic, we should ask the question, what is temptation itself?

Let's start there with just defining the term. The word temptation that the Lord uses in verse 40, repeated again in verse 46, is the word *peirasmos*. *Peirasmos*. It's a, it's a word that really cuts two ways. It could be used, depending on the context, it can either speak of something positive or something negative. Used positively, when a *peirasmos* is delivered by God, that word refers to a test, to a trial, which is positively oriented, positive in nature.

As, as a *peirasmos* that comes from God, it's testing our faith. It's proving and improving our faith. It's maturing and strengthening our faith. And this is what God is doing for his people all the time. He's putting us through tests, trials, *peirasmos*. And they come in many, in varied forms. As James says, "Consider it all joy when you encounter trials of various

kinds." *Peirasmos* of various kinds. Consider it joy when it comes from God because he's testing to prove and to improve our faith.

Used negatively, though, and it's used quite often in Scripture this way, *peirasmos* is a temptation to solicit or to entice someone to transgress, to commit sin. This is the devil's chief tool is temptation. The agents of temptation are sinners, whether they're angelic sinners like the devil and his demons, or human sinners. Human sinners also tempt others and solicit others to join them in committing evil.

Let's expand the definition just a little bit by turning to John Owen. John Owen writes this in his, if you ever want to get this, it's in his works, Volume 6. I'll be quoting a number of times from John Owen, so you ought to pick up, I tell every Christian this, get a copy. If you don't want to get the entire copy of John Owen's works, which I do recommend, just get one volume, volume 6 and work through the treatises there.

In his particular treatise "Of Temptation," he says this: "Temptation in general is anything, state, way, or condition, that upon any account whatever has a force or efficacy to seduce, to draw the mind and heart of a man from its obedience, which God requires of him, into any sin in any degree of it whatever." Pretty thorough. He goes on to say, "In particular, that is a temptation to any man which causes or occasions him to sin, or in anything to go off from his duty, either by bringing evil into his heart, or drawing out that evil that is in his heart, or any other way diverting him from communion with God and that constant, equal, universal obedience in matter and in manner that is required of him." End quote.

That's temptation: pulling you away from your duty, drawing you into some form of sin, self-indulgent sin, some form of anger, lust, envy, gossip, slander. Whatever it is, it's that thing which draws you in to either committing that evil or failing to do what God commands you to do. Now it's not a sin to face a temptation. Okay? We face temptations all the time. We're confronted with temptations. We see that in Jesus himself. "He was tempted in all things, as we are," Hebrews 4:15, "yet without sin." He was not sinning by being faced with temptation.

We see that "the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness to be tested" in Matthew 4, Luke 4. The positive use of *peirasmōs*, there. The Spirit drove him into the wilderness to be tested, to be proven. The devil, though, was there to tempt him. *Peirasmōs* again, but used in the negative way. The testing of God, which is positive and good, designed for his good, that testing came by the agency of the devil, who is wicked and evil and used tempting to seduce Jesus, tried to tempt him, tried to throw him off of his righteousness.

Now, as I said, it's not a sin to encounter a temptation, which we see in Christ, which we also encounter, and we stand up to temptation by God's grace and obedience to his Word. But what about this matter of entering into temptation? What does that distinct phrase mean? We know falling to temptation is sin. How do we distinguish, entering into temptation and falling to temptation?

As John Owen has said, entering into temptation is not merely to be tempted, on the one hand, or on the other end of

it, to fall into temptation, which is to commit the transgression itself. Entering into temptation, we could put it this way, it's the pondering of that sin. It's turning it over in the mind. It's considering the thought. It's imagining what that might be like, imagining the outcome. Owen describes it as, I like this phrase, "being entangled and detained by temptation." That's what it is to enter into temptation, to be entangled by it, to be detained by it.

If you've ever been on foot, like a hike or something like that in a forested area, especially in some of the eastern regions of the United States, maybe you've experienced becoming entangled in the undergrowth. All's well when you're strolling along pleasant pathways and walking through pine forests or enter into the lush grasses of flowery meadows, and all that's easy and wonderful and great for your photography.

But leaving the pleasant paths and easy paths and passing through the thick undergrowth, maybe in the choking narrow draws between the hills, you can enter into and encounter thorny vines and briars and snares. We used to call them wait-a-minute vines

and they'd grab ahold of you and say, hey, wait a minute. And then, when the more you struggle, the more you get entangled, and then, then you have to pull out a machete and start hacking your way out of there. But you get yourself entangled in those wait-a-minute vines, and you become detained by them, held up. You can't get anywhere.

Applying this to the Christian life, to be entangled and detained indefinitely or permanently, that's what describes the non-Christian, not the Christian, the non-Christian. We see that in the Parable of the Soils, don't we, Matthew 13, that though a person receives the Word and looks like a believer for a long, long time, short time or long time, but they appear to be Christians, but any fruit that they would produce is choked out by the worries and the riches and the worldly pleasures.

Those people, they appear to be Christians even for a long time, but John 15:6 says they're false branches. They bear no genuine, spirit-produced fruit. So they're not Christians. To be entangled and detained by these temptations and sins indefinitely, that describes a non-Christian, not a Christian.



Could be a religious non-Christian, could be a church-attending non-Christian, but he's not a Christian.

Genuine believers, though, you and I, and you know this by experience, we, too, can become entangled and detained by temptations. It's temporary, it's not permanent. In time, by divine grace and by the Spirit and the Word and the obedience of faith, Christians by God's grace break free from temptations. Perfectly? No. Sometimes there's a stretch, there, of being overcome, being entangled, being detained, not understanding, failing. They can for a time enter into temptation.

John Owen says, "When we allow a temptation to enter us, then we enter into temptation. Whilst it knocks at the door, we're at liberty. But when any temptation comes in and parleys with the heart, reasons with the mind, entices and allures, the affections, be it a long or a short time, do it thus insensibly and imperceptible, or do the soul take notice of it, we enter into temptation."

Couple pages later John Owen describes this experience. And again, all true Christians can understand this. All true Christians have, have gone through this and experienced this. He says, "The soul, by conversing with the evil, begins to grow, as it were, familiar with it, not to be startled by the temptation as formerly, but rather it inclines to the cry, 'Is it not a little one?' And then the temptation is coming towards its high noon. Lust hath then entangled, and is ready to conceive," James 1:15.

We see that pattern Owen describes in the very first temptation back in the Garden of Eden. We're in the Garden of Gethsemane, here. We can go back to the Garden of Eden. You can turn there if you'd like to, but just listen if you'd like to. I'm going to do this very quickly, but Genesis chapter 3, we see the prototype, really, for all temptation and sin, where the devil came, tempted Eve to doubt God's Word. And in tempting Eve to doubt God's word, he attacked God's goodness. He assassinated God's character.

He called Eve to consider that maybe this God, who has provided for all things and given you great goodness and wonderful things to enjoy and a husband and all kinds of wonderful gifts, but he's got an ulterior motive, don't you know. This God is a narcissist. This God loves to hear his own words spoken back to him. He loves to hear praise from his people. He's trying to keep you from the best.

Look at the passage if you've turned there. But it says in Genesis 3, "The serpent was more crafty than any beast in the field which Yahweh God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden"?' " insinuating man, what a heavy, harsh God! "And the woman said to the serpent, 'Well, from the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God said, "You shall not eat from it, you shall not touch it, lest you die.'" The serpent said to the woman, now that you're parlaying with me, now that you're entering into a conversation with me, wonderful! Let's keep talking.

“‘You will not surely die, for God knows,’” here's what's in his heart, here's what's in his mind, here's what, here's what he's keeping from you, “‘God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes are going to be opened, and you're going to be like God, knowing good and evil.’ Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food. It's a delight to the eyes. The tree is desirable to make one wise.” That shows she's swallowing it, hook, line and sinker. “And so she took from its fruit and ate, and she also gave to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

The devil visited Eve with temptation, verses 1,4, 5, seducing her, offering to her this God-like knowledge and insight, tempting her to disbelieve God and believe in herself, enticing her to transgress God's commandment. And had she turned away, she would not have entered into temptation, would not have fallen into transgression. But the devil's temptation conceived in Eve's mind as we see there in verse 6, as she's turning it over, and giving birth to sin, it brought forth death, didn't it?

The process that Jesus calls entering to temptation, that happened here with Eve, really, when she's conversing with the devil, having a dialogue with the devil, having a dialogue with the tempter. The devil's words started to parlay with her heart, reason with her mind, entice her affections and pull them away from her innocence toward sin. She conversed with the devil, verse 2, became familiar with his words, his ways. His temptation no longer shocked her, and then it came to rest, finding a home in her heart, entangling her, causing her to, to be detained there and then to fall into temptation and transgress and to die.

It's an important distinction to make, here, that the formal transgression, that happened at the very end of verse 6 when she took a bite of the forbidden fruit. But notice, where did the sin begin? That happened before the transgression, didn't it? That happened when Eve dallied with the tempter and his temptation. That's when she entered into temptation, and that's where sin began, before the transgression. And as I said, that's an important distinction to make. Though Eve had known the prohibition against eating the fruit from the forbidden tree, and she, according to her answer to the devil, don't eat

it, don't even touch it, she seemed resolved in her heart not to ever commit that sin.

She was caught unaware by the temptation that would lead her to do what God expressly forbade, what she was committed to obey. The temptation worked itself over in her mind, softened her will, and turned her toward the flesh. And for Eve, who was created in innocence, she had no precedent for this experience of temptation, but that's not the experience of the disciples, is it? Not their experience at all, not yours, not mine, a lifetime of experience with temptation.

And then going back to Luke 22, the warning, the warning that Jesus gives right before facing the temptation. We should consider them duly warned, duly commanded, protected just by Jesus giving the command. We know how they fared. They failed to obey the Lord's command. They were not watchful for the temptations that would visit them and lead them into sin. Jesus catches them asleep in disobedience, and he comes to them and rebukes them.

Go to the end of, this is for the second point. This is the second point in our outline: Accept his restorative rebuke. Accept his restorative rebuke. We need to obey his protective commands, but there are times we all must admit, the disciples have to admit, they didn't obey his protective commands and they fell into sin. And so when he comes and rebukes us, or when the Word rebukes us, or when a Christian brother or sister or family member or friend comes and rebukes you, accept the restorative rebuke. Don't resist it. Don't ignore it. Don't downplay it. Accept it. Join the rest of the fallen human race. None of us are perfect.

Look at Luke 22:45, accept the restorative rebuke. "He rose up from prayer and he came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow." Luke is the only one, by the way, the doctor looking for the cause that leads to the effect. He goes down and says "they were sleeping from sorrow." The other Gospel writers tell us they were weary, they're sleepy, they were overcome with sleep. Here, he tells us why they were overcome with sleep. "He found them sleeping from sorrow, and Jesus said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.'"

It's such a contrast, there. Jesus rises up from praying, and he calls them to rise up, not from praying, but from sleeping. He's been conscious, awake, doing battle. They? Unconscious, fast asleep, doing absolutely nothing. But Jesus had been watching, which drove him to prayer, and he found his help from God. They had not been watching, and so they were not praying, and they were still in need of God's help.

I'm making the case here, the disciples sinned by falling asleep. Do you see it that way? Do you understand that they're sleeping? In and of itself, sleep is not a bad thing. It's a good thing. We all need it. So what was the nature of their sin? If we say they sinned, okay, how did they sin? Yes, they sinned. If we just kind of put it into this kind of frame of mind, falling asleep on guard duty and in a time like this, which is a time of war, the greatest war that has ever been carried out since the beginning of time, all the way till God casts Satan into the lake of fire, that's a long war that Satan has been prosecuting against his creator, against God.

And we are brought into it in our salvation. We're made aware of it. We're put on the right side in that war. For Jesus, he gets this. He's a warrior *par excellence*, and we are enlisted into his army when we are saved and brought into the kingdom of light. So falling asleep on guard duty at a time like this, the greatest battle of this war, that's grounds for execution. You say, but they were weary, and I say, was not Jesus far more weary? You say, but they were overcome with sorrow. They were broken-hearted. And I say, Jesus was, Matthew 26:38 says, was "deeply grieved."

One translation puts it this way in Jesus' words, "My soul is swallowed up in sorrow to the point of death." Did sorrow impede his duty to watch and pray? No, it did not. You say, okay, but listen, they were mere men; they couldn't help themselves. And I answer, Jesus too was a man, and he wasn't calling on them to help themselves, but to seek help from God just as he did. Power is not in our own strong humanity. The flesh is weak indeed. It's the Spirit that will bring us through this, and the Spirit that must be strengthened by God. It's by the Spirit and by his Word and by God and his working that were

uplifted and upheld. So yeah, they sinned, here, by sleeping. They sinned by being overcome with sorrow.

So what was the nature of this sin? It's called a sin of omission. Omission, that is the, to say the disciples failed to do their duty. Jesus told them, "Watch and pray," and they did not do that, did they? They fell asleep instead. This is a sin of failing to do one's duty. It's a sin of omission, here, in the face of a clear command. That is omission, and the result of their sin of omission, the result of failing to do their duty to watch and pray, is more sin. Sin begets sin. And in this case, failing to watch and pray as he commanded them, they sowed the seed of further sin.

Next they would commit not only a sin of omission, failing to do their duty, falling asleep, but they sinned a terrible sin of commission: cowardice. What was that? All the disciples, not just Peter, but all of them, failed to confess Jesus Christ as Lord. They failed to stand with him in his hour of testing, stand by him, be there, stand for his cause, confess him in the face of authorities, in the face of the public. It's a great

sin. Jesus said, "Those who confess me before men, I'll confess before my Father in heaven. Those who deny me before men, I'll deny before my Father in heaven." It's a very serious sin.

It's one that we don't pay enough heed to. We've all felt that. We've all, in weakness and cowardness and a lack of faith and lack of strength, cratered when we ought to stand firm, cowered when we ought to have stood strong, denied when we ought to confess. So Jesus sees this sin that he knows these men don't want to commit. He knows they love him. So Jesus commands them to pray, which they didn't do, or at least they didn't do persistently and fervently. He told them how to withstand temptation. They succumbed to the flesh and its weakness, to its weariness, feelings of sorrow. They entered into temptation. They failed to do their duty.

So the sin of omission led to the sin of commission. By failing to watch and pray, failing to do their duty, they entered into temptation. They fled when they should have stood firm. They denied him when they should have affirmed him and confessed him. As I said, although he is gentle and kind and

compassionate, we see, here, he does not give them a pass for being tired, for being overcome with sorrow, because if anyone was sorrowful, he was, and to the most intense degree ever known to any human being.

But weariness, sleepiness, sorrow, grief, whatever we may struggle with, whatever we may face, there's no excuse for sinning. And that's the tone here. Though gentle, this is a rebuke. Look, I told you to pray just a little bit ago. Told you to pray. I come back and find you sleeping. Men, think about why that is. Think about why that is. Consider the reason for your sleeping and then repent of it. Remember what I said from the beginning because I have no other counsel. Rise and pray that you may not enter in temptation. You think you're going to get a different sentence, a different command? What I said at the beginning was perfect. I'll say it again.

So what tempted the disciples? What tempted them? We see the effect, we see the result of them falling to temptation. But what is it that tempted them? What led them here? Sure, they were physically tired, but the Lord told them to stay awake,

watch and pray. I said this just a minute ago, sleep in and of itself not sinful, but sleeping when you're told to stay awake and watch and pray, that's sinful. So the temptation to diminish the significance of the command, to give in to the pleading of the body, to just shut the eyes just a little bit and rest.

They entered into the temptation, dallied a little bit, entertained the thought, fell fast asleep. He's over there. He seems good. Peter, James and John are close by. It's not going to hurt if I, guys, you got this, right? I'm just going to sit over here, close my eyes just for a minute. They diminished the weight of his command. They treated his command as if it wasn't weighty, as if it's, if it's, all his commands, commands are not in force. What else tempted the disciples? Well, it says here they were sorrowful, right? Troubled hearts, troubled minds. So they're tempted, here, to check out for a bit. It's too heavy for them. So they're going to shut down. They're going to mentally escape.

Now, these guys didn't have a streaming platform like Netflix, so they couldn't binge some show and kind of escape

reality that way. They didn't have wine close at hand. They were at Gethsemane, an olive press, not a wine press. So drinking to forget their troubles, that's not an option either. What's the quickest way to escape their troubles, here? Sleep.

We see, on the one hand, sensuality, giving into physical sensations and impulses, sensuality prioritizing the demands and the protests of the body over the duties of the spirit. We see also, in addition to sensuality, we see escapism, trying to ignore or avoid a troubled mind, a saddened heart, a perplexed soul, by shutting down and checking out in some way rather than driving through the issue, working the problem righteously, praying your way through it. Now, can you identify with any of that? The enticement of sensuality, the allurements of escapism? Of course. We'll come back to that in a second.

Since Jesus was, we know, tempted in all points as we are, including sensuality, to give in to the demands of the body and escapism, to check out from the sorrow that he's facing in the grief and the internal struggle, since he was tempted in all points, as we are, yet without sin, let's see how he battled

against temptation. Let's see how he battled and then won the victory.

Number three point in our outline: Follow his instructive example. Follow his instructive example. Whatever weakness the disciples had in the flesh, they would have been helped, wouldn't they, if they had observed Jesus' example, particularly for the inner circle, three, the three that Jesus chose to stay close by him, Peter, James, and John.

Go over to Matthew 26 for a moment and take a look at that account, which is a little bit more expanded, a few more details than we find in Luke. But Matthew 26 and starting in verse 36, here's how Matthew sets the scene. He says, "Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' "He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee. He began to be grieved and distressed. And then he said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death,'" or that, like that other translation says, "'swallowed up in sorrow. Remain here and keep watch with me.' "

The weariness of sorrow led to the disciples sleeping when they should have been praying. So if they were sensing their own sorrow, and they had observed how Jesus handled his sorrow, they would have stood firm against their own temptations. So here's, just to follow Jesus' example, listen to several points of observation here. Let me just give, I think I have four of these. First notice, notice his watchfulness for the purpose of prayer. His watchfulness for prayer, for the watching of Jesus, you could say, that prompted his praying.

We pointed out Jesus had already been watching. That's why he left the upper room, went to the garden, made sure he'd have time for praying. In his watchfulness, he recognized an apprehensiveness in his soul about going to the cross, became a temptation to avoid the cross, a solicitation of his heart to avoid it. But he was watching for it. And because he was watching, the thought, that allurements, that enticement didn't take him by surprise. He's watchful, acknowledging his weak condition.

He recognizes his vulnerability, and in grief and in distress, verse 37, he's not reluctant to admit this to his disciples, who, men who were lesser than he, weaker than he. Verse 38, he says, "'My soul is deeply grieves to the point of death.'" Remarkable humility of Christ, isn't it? Although he had a divine nature, he is not ashamed to admit the weakness of his human nature and to ask his men for prayer. "'Remain here, keep watch with me.'" He's watchful, he prays. He wants them to be watchful with him and pray with him for their own sake, for his, too. Watchfulness for the purpose of prayer.

Second, we see his humility and the submissiveness of his prayer, which is oriented to, set on, obedience. He prays, here, as a finite human being. He's not knowing the full counsel of the divine will as a man. He's a man who accepts his limited knowledge. He's a man who doesn't have access, in his humanity, his human nature, to the eternal decree of God. And so he prays honestly, humbly, submissively, sincerely. We've seen all that in our study in the past two weeks. But look at Matthew 26:39. "He went a little bit beyond them, fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me, yet not as I will, but as you will.'"

It just says that same thing a second time, verse 42, “‘My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, it will be done.’” Same thing we saw in Luke's abbreviated account, “‘Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done.’” In other words, he prays in humility. He prays submissively. Father, if there's some place in the divine decree, some possibility in your hidden purpose, not yet known, not yet revealed, that would spare me from drinking this cup, and yet let not my subjective desire determine what happens. Your will: Let that be done. He prays as a man, dependent, humble, sincere, at the same time submissive and eager to do God's will. So he prays, watch, in watchfulness. He prays in submissiveness.

And then we see a third observation, the persistence of his prayer, verses 42-44, Matthew 26, “He went away and prayed a second time, saying, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, your will be done.’ Again, he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. He left him again, went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.” Three times he went away to pray. We learn from Luke 22:43; in

fact, you can return to Luke at this point, Luke 22:43. Jesus endured in prayer. He persisted in his praying until he was so physically spent and emotionally drained, the father deployed an angel to strengthen him.

Paul followed the same example when he asked the Lord three times to remove the thorn in the flesh as he battled with his own temptation. Second Corinthians 12:8, "I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me." How did the Lord answer Paul? "He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you. My power is perfected in weakness.'" That answer is spoken by the Lord, who knew what it meant to depend on God in weakness, a Lord who suffered far worse than Paul ever had, a Lord who had also had to learn to rely on the grace of God to strengthen him. Then in being strengthened, ministered to by the angel, Luke 22:44 says, Jesus used that strength to return to praying even more earnestly, even more fervently, even to the point of an intense form of sweating as his blood is mixed in with his sweat. The agony, the *agonia*, the contest for him, was that intense.

So we see the, in the Lord's instructive example, we see the watchfulness for prayer, the submissiveness of his prayer, the persistence of his prayer. Let me give you one more: In the Lord, fourth, we see the dependence in his prayer. Jesus is relying, here, on God, not himself. He trusts wholly, unreservedly in God, knowing when God does exactly as he wills, he'll do good to him, uphold him, carry him, not away from the trial, but through the trial. That's the central focus of Luke's account. As we said, the focal point of the chiastic structure, Luke 22:43, "An angel from heaven appeared to him, strengthening him." Jesus never asked the Father for an angel, never mentioned his own weariness, his need for physical replenishment. But the father saw his need, sent the angel, ministered to a need.

That tells us something, doesn't it? It tells us that God knows what we need. God is watching. We learn from that. He's watching out for his son. He attends to the needs of his son that his son isn't even praying about, not even thinking about at that moment or, or considering. He strengthens him for the trial. And will not God the father do the same for the disciples of Jesus? Will he not do the same for you and me? Temptations the disciples faced are common to all. Sensuality, escapism,

many others besides, common to all. So we, too, have to be watchful, don't we? We, too, must be praying when temptation visits us, so we don't enter into temptation and then fall into sin.

But because we're not watching for the temptation that leads us into sin, we're often taken by surprise at the resultant sin, the fruit of that temptation. We wonder how it is we got there. We were doing so well spiritually. What happened? Hear a great sermon on marriage and how do husbands treat wives and wives treat husbands, and it's so wonderful. We, we leave the little, the sermon or the conference or whatever it is, we go home and argue. What just happened? Wonder how it is we could commit such awful, shameful sin. What explains the failure?

Well, because like Eve, we fail to be watchful against prior temptations that lead us, like an ox to the slaughter, into deadly sin. John Owen writes this, "When men are overtaken with a sin, they set themselves to repent of that sin, but they do not consider the temptation that was the cause of it, to set themselves against that also, and to take care that they enter

no more into it. It being not the sin, but the temptation itself that leads to the sin, and hence they are quickly again entangled by it, though they have the greatest detestation of the sin itself that can be expressed. He that would indeed get the conquest over any sin must consider his temptations to it and strike at that root without deliverance. From thence he will not be healed."

When soldiers are out in a conflict zone, they're holding a position. They're in a forward operating base, every night attacked by an enemy that hits them with small arms or rocket fire or mortar fire. The enemy, it seems to them from the perception that they have in their perimeter in their forward operating base, seems to hit from every direction, takes them by surprise until a veteran, usually a good Staff Sergeant, says, enough of this. Enough! That grizzled Staff Sergeant organizes men into patrols, leads them out to track the enemy back along its routes of infiltration, going back to the point of their origin, their muster point, so you can know where the enemy forces gather to attack and the routes they take to attack them and get to their forward operating base.

So rather than fighting the enemy at their own perimeter, where they're surprised, where they're robbed of their rest, the Staff Sergeant chooses to ambush the enemy before he ever gets to them. Goes to the enemy along a point, a route of infiltration. Goes to the mustering point. The Staff Sergeant posts a small recon element somewhere with a radio, gathering intelligence, watching enemy movement, learning the routes of infiltration and at the right time and the right place, the Staff Sergeant has his radioman call an air strike. Game over. No more enemy, no more hassle around my perimeter. Let's get some sleep, rest, replenish ourselves.

You see the analogy, right? Attacks at your perimeter. You are in a forward operating base, by the way, living in this world. We navigate through enemy territory all the time, don't we? "We don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this present darkness," Ephesians 6. So attacks at your perimeter, these are the particular sins that trouble you and grieve you and offend God and, and cause you great shame. But the routes of infiltration, these are the temptations that lead to these attacks, and we must destroy them before they ever reach us.

Again, John Owen says, "This is a folly that possesses many who have yet a quick and living sense of sin. They're sensible of their sins, not of their temptations. They're displeased with the bitter fruit, ah, but they cherish the poisonous root. Hence, in the midst of their humiliations for sin, they will continue in those ways, those societies, in the pursuit of those ends which have occasioned that sin." How many have committed some grievous, shameful sin, such as looking at pornography, and then conscious of the shame and confessing that sin and seeking God's forgiveness, finding rest in forgiveness, restoration, reconciliation with God.

But how common it is, not only for men these days, for women too, how common it is to come through that awful episode utterly resolved to never again do such an evil, never again commit such a vile sin, such an offense against God, an offense against a spouse, an offense against the church, only to do so. Look, the intelligent Christian fights the battle with sin, not at the perimeter of his life, but along the routes of infiltration, attacking the sin at the temptation site so as not to ever enter into temptation in the first place.

Watch and pray. Watch for sensuality, wanting to feel good. Watch for escapism, wanting to avoid or ignore problems and bad feelings. If you do not, you will find yourself overcome with many vile and shameful lusts and sins, sexual sin, gluttony, drunkenness, laziness, sleeping too much, squandering time with too much screen time, entertaining self, distracting self. Watch for anger and envy, being covetous of the praise and the success of others. Proverbs 24:7 says, "Wrath is cruel, anger is outrageous. But who is able to stand before envy?" Those who give into the temptation of jealousy and envy or covetous of praise, they'll assassinate the reputation of other people with slander and maligning, gossip.

Watch out, and I say it, talked about sexual sin or pornography, but think about it as from a woman's perspective. Watch out for the undue concern over physical appearance, attractiveness, body image. Don't be caught up in the marketing of this world; and, by the way, the, the pornography of this world. Don't play into the same lie from the other side. Don't be concerned, undue concern over physical appearance and body image, whether that's due to vanity that is effectively calling

others to worship you, or due to fear that a spouse isn't going to find you appealing enough. Watch out for the cues of the culture, all the marketing ads that appeal to sensuality, stokes covetousness, provokes discontentment.

Watch out for pride. Watch out for the fear of man, wanting everybody to think well of you, wanting everyone to say nice things about you, to praise you, to think you're great, to think you're intelligent, to think you're really compassionate, gentle, wonderful, wise, whatever it is. Watch out for wanting to be everybody's friend even at the expense of righteousness, straightforward speech. These temptations are those that lead to gossip, slander, maligning of others, or receiving words of gossip and slander and maligning.

Watch out for this one, especially prominent today. Watch out for fear, anxiety, and worry, the temptation to trust self and not to trust God in fixing ourselves, especially with healthcare issues, nutrition issues, but also financial issues, relational issues. Fear, anxiety, worry, trusting self, not trusting God, not resting in him, leads in to all manner of

troublesome habits. And there is a, a world called the Internet that will feed and feed and feed. And there are really intelligent people writing algorithms that will continue to feed what you look for and give you more of it and more of it.

Some, through this process, become nosey busybodies, inserting themselves into everybody else's business, taking up other people's offenses, distorting, perverting justice. Some people engage in doom scrolling. If you're wondering what doom scrolling is, and your immediate impulse is to go to the Internet and scroll, that might be you. Doom scrolling, dropping down into Internet rabbit holes, excessive time going through articles, videos, posts that not only respond to your feelings of fear and anxiety and worry, but feed them, evoking more of them, leading you to greater fear and total despair, hopelessness, and even anger. Doom scrolling through health concerns, diet, nutrition, parenting issues, pet theological issues. And those who do so suffer disaster of their souls in those, what I call reality distortion zones.

It's not my term. It was first used of Steve Jobs. Anybody who got into Steve Jobs' company entered into a reality distortion zone because he told them the way things were, and the way things were didn't actually comport to reality, but they were his reality. In order to work at his company, you had to think like he did. So he created an iPhone for you to think the same way. Many engage in selective fact-finding on the Internet, result of partial information. And that partial information just feeds pride so that people think of themselves as informed. They think of themselves as intelligent, but they're really blinded in their ignorance because they really don't know. They don't have the qualifications to process information to begin with.

Many go on the Internet stoking irrational fears. They become suspicious of everyone and everything, especially once-trusted authorities and once-trusted institutions. They isolate themselves, then, from others and they shrink away from duties to God and man. Look, we're to be watchful. I've just mentioned a few. These are temptations that enter into the soul and call for a parlay with your spirit, call for a parlay with your heart, and cause you, lead you into sin. We're to be watchful for these things, not let them take us unaware. We're to trace

from the attack and from the fall, we're to trace that back along the points of infiltration in our hearts, back to the point of origin along the lines of infiltration. Be watchful when we see any of these temptations.

Others I've not mentioned. When they show up in our hearts and minds and appeal to our feelings and entice us with sensuality, escapism in any way, and when they show up, what are we to do? Pray. You have no strength in yourself. God has all strength to obliterate the temptation. Pray that we don't enter into temptation.

You know you're entering into temptation when some sinful impulse creeps into your mind, and you grant that impulse time with your thoughts, so it becomes an object of pondering, worse, when it inflames your imagination, engages your imagination. And you know what I'm talking about. It's when you play with it in your mind, roll it over, ponder it even for a little bit, when you allow that thought to roam freely and having, having free pass in your mind to wander around, play the game of hide-and-

seek with it. You know it's there, but you refuse to eradicate it by going to earnest prayer, calling for God to blow it up.

You know you're entering into temptation when you don't immediately abhor that sin, abhor that suggestion, when you don't drag it out into the light of divine truth right away, see it for what it is, name it as God names it. Since it's sinful, we give it no quarter. We put it to death according to Colossians 3:5. We mortify that thing, terminate it with extreme prejudice. And when you don't abhor it, what's the temptation? What do you need to pray against? That you don't abhor it. And you go to God and say, God, I don't abhor this thing as I ought to. I don't see it rightly. I don't see it as you see it. Teach me to hate it as you hate it, but drive it away.

You know you're entering into temptation when not only do you not abhor that thought, abhor that suggestion, but you make excuses for it, or you defend it, or worse, you justify it. Don't make resisting temptation more complicated than it really is. God's Word, as we've just demonstrated, makes this really simple. It's the sinful, lazy mind that throws up objections,

considerations, create, creates instances, hypotheticals, complicates what God calls sin. You know, just like he said about, you know, using Lot's language about little Zoar, "Is it not a little one? Isn't that a little city? Is it not a little temptation? Is it not a minor thing?"

You know you're entering into temptation when you minimize it, then, calling it something other than what it really is. Nah, he's using words like grumbling, complaining, slandering. He's not doing any of that. He's just venting. We all need to vent sometimes, don't we? Are you so presumptuous that you think you have the authority to rename what God calls sin and minimize what God hates, make it less abhorrent, that God considers it?

Again, why all this concern to resist temptation? Why all this concern not to fall into sin? I mean, we know sin's bad, but is really that the practice of Christianity, just to stay away from what's bad? As I said from the beginning, sin is an obstacle. Sin's a distraction. Sin is an off-ramp into bad, sinky, murky places. Takes you off the highway, free highway of doing God's Word, doing God's will. That's why Jesus wrestled,

prayed, and came through victoriously, because he didn't want anything preventing him from doing God's will, because God's will, "for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." And what has he done after suffering? Glory: "He sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Father."

He's there now with his father in bliss. When we're suffering, that's what he calls us to. And in the cross, Jesus knew that on display in the cross is the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation. He wanted to see the wisdom of God on display and the power of God show itself strong. And so sin is a distraction. Sin would completely undermine that. He's not going to let it get in the way. No way. He knows he's not strong in, in his flesh, his human nature to stand up to it. So what does he do? Gets on his knees, he prays. He knows God has the power. The divine nature can drive away all sin. So that's what he accomplished at the cross, doing God's will so that the wisdom and power of God would be on display in the cross.

This is what we, too, get to be involved in. When we don't sin, when our conscience is clear, and our hearts are strong and our shoulders are back and our chin is up, we have all confidence to march forward, and in our lives as we live in righteousness, you know what's on display in our lives? The wisdom of God in how we live, taking the knowledge of God and using it to righteous ends. You know what else is on display in our lives? Because the explanation for us is not us, it's God. And so it's his power that's on display in us when we walk righteously, when we walk in wisdom. We put the Gospel on display in the way we live our lives. That's our testimony to the world. Don't let sin thwart that.

There's so much more we could say on this subject. Time is gone. I want to invite you to go just a bit further, any one of you, first by getting the volume that I mentioned at the beginning, Volume 6 of John Owens' works. Go through, *On Mortification*, just to hear the battle cry, the battle call, the call to arms to fight and kill sin. Next, *treatise on Temptation*, so that you learn about the nature of temptation even further, to a further depth than what we've got here. This is just a scratch in the surface, but there's so much to learn.

And then as you fight sin and you also resist temptation, there's another treatise that tells you about, *The Nature of Indwelling Sin in the Believer's Life*, so you can understand what's going on with this law principle of sin. So much good stuff. I invite you to go further.

You can also get on our website and go to the last STM message, just called simply, *Watch and Pray*. Listen carefully to that message to the men. STM, if you haven't, if you're not familiar with that, it's Shepherd's, Theologians, Men. We want men to have the heart of a shepherd, the mind of a theologian and that's what it is to be a man. Men teach, lead, communicate, influence anybody in their lives and that's what we want the men to do. But take that message, *Watch and Pray*, go a little bit further. In fact, do a group study, commit with others to watch and praying for one another. And if you want a simple list how to get started right now, for today, just take the three points of this message and turn them into action items for yourself.

Heed, obey the Lord's protective commands. Follow Jesus' example of instructive prayer because it's instructive to us.

GRACE CHURCH



And even when you, you know, be watchful in it, be submissive in it, persistent in prayer, dependent in prayer. And then when we fail from time to time, go to the Lord, confess your sin, ask him to forgive you. He will, 1 John 1:9. Accept, heed, accept his correction, heed it, heed his rebuke, and go back to heeding the Lord's command and following the example in prayer.

I hope and pray, it's my prayer, it's our elders' prayer, that we do this together as a church. Families, friends, church members watching for one another, prayerful for one another so that we can all get on with the business of doing the good and perfect will of God, demonstrating the power of God to transform a life like ours. Let's pray.

Father, we're so grateful for the instruction you've given us in your Word, and we're thankful for the perfect example of the Lord Jesus Christ, his marvelous commands, his marvelous example, his ways. We're so thankful to be caught up in this great salvation. We just pray that you would help us not to neglect it, not to neglect to be watchful, not to be lazy,



distracted Christians. Instead, help us to be watchful,
diligent, prayerful.

Let us rejoice in seeing you come to our need, come to our aid in prayer, driving away temptation, obliterating it. You give us hearts after your heart, hearts after the Lord Jesus Christ, and fill us with abhorrence for sin, the refusal to be caught up in its distractions and entanglements, detainments, and instead walk in joy and gratitude as productive, fruitful Christians who demonstrate your transforming power. We love you and thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.