

Message #111

Luke 22:39-46

We are living in a dark and depraved world. It is a world of turmoil and crisis and Satan and his demons are causing havoc all over the world. Satan is like a roaring lion, seeking to devour. His goal is to tempt God's people so he can cause them to turn away from God's word and will. He is vicious, sly and powerful. He is on the prowl, looking to attack. In and of ourselves we are no match against him. But there is a defensive weapon we can use that not only prevents us from falling into temptation, but it is a key to great victory. **That weapon is prayer.**

Prayer is an extremely important key to survival in a Satanic world. It is a key to survival in a world filled with trials, troubles and temptations. That point is demonstrated by the very life of Jesus Christ.

Jesus taught this critical point in His final hours of life before dying on a cross. He was about to face the ultimate trial. He was about to be taken prisoner, He was about to die and take on Himself the wrath of God and the sin of all people. He wanted His people to understand this important truth: you survive through prayer.

What we see here is this:

JESUS CHRIST SPECIFICALLY TEACHES THAT A KEY TO NOT ENTERING INTO TEMPTATION AND NOT YIELDING TO TEMPTATION IS PRAYER.

Every believer, even at best, has an old nature that is prone to sin and fail. This is a world dominated by Satan that is out to cause the believer to fail. The key to not succumbing and not failing is prayer.

There are four Christological observations we want to make. They all begin with a noun that starts with the letter "C":

CHRISTOLOGICAL OBSERVATION #1 – The custom of Jesus Christ was to go to the Mount of Olives. **22:39**

That word "custom" means this was Christ's habit. It was Christ's habitual practice to go to the Mount of Olives. While He was in Jerusalem, He developed a pattern and that pattern was He would leave the Temple and go up on the Mount of Olives (Luke 21:37).

There are at least three reasons why Christ would have gone up on this mountain, all of which begin with the letter "P."

Reason #1 - Jesus went up on that mountain because of prophecy. **Zech. 14:4**

Jesus Christ was well aware of the fact that this would be the very spot to which He would return as King to take charge of the world. The O.T. clearly predicted that His feet would stand right on that Mountain at His second coming (Zech. 14:4).

In view of what He was about to face, it must have been a comfort for Him to think about the future at this very spot. What was about to happen to Him would be awful, but eventually this very spot would be a wonderful place for His return.

Reason #2 - Jesus went up on that mountain because of privacy. **Luke 21:37-38**

There were times when Jesus just needed to get away from the crowds. There were times He needed to be alone from the pressure of ministry and the Mount of Olives was a great place for Him to escape. There are three peaks on that mountain and it spreads out over a couple of miles on the top, so He could have some privacy, especially if He were there at night.

Reason #3 - Jesus went up on that mountain because of prayer. **Luke 22:39-40**

The Mount of Olives was a wonderful place to get alone with God and pray. This was the norm of His life. His habit was to get alone with God and pray. People today are losing sight of this, but a **critical key to survival is that the believer gets alone with God and prays**. It is one thing to go to prayer meetings; it is a good thing to have people pray for you; **but nothing will ever replace you personally getting alone with God and praying**. That is what Jesus did.

Luke is very careful in his gospel to point this out. Prayer was a critical theme that Luke wanted the Gentile Theophilus to know.

- 1) He prayed at the inauguration of His ministry - Luke 3:21 - Baptism.
- 2) He prayed prior to great opposition - Luke 5:16 - Pharisees and teachers trying to trap Him.
- 3) He prayed prior to making major decisions - Luke 6:12-13 - selection of disciple/Apostles.
- 4) He prayed prior to performing miracles - Luke 9:16 - five loaves and two fish feeds thousands.
- 5) He prayed thinking about His sufferings - Luke 9:18, 22 - thinking about the cross.
- 6) He prayed when people rejected His identity - Luke 9:18-19 - few knew who He was.
- 7) He prayed prior to His transfiguration - Luke 9:27-29 - displaying that He is glorious God.
- 8) He taught His disciples how to pray - Luke 11:1-3 - He wanted them praying.
- 9) He prayed in immeasurable Personal trials - Luke 22:40-46 - including facing the wrath of God.
- 10) He died praying - Luke 23:34, 46.

Jesus Christ made a habit of praying. His custom of life was to pray. If this were the habit of our sinless Lord, then how much more should it be our habit? A key to not falling into temptation is prayer. But it is not just a one-time prayer. It is continual, habitual prayer that makes a huge difference in one's life.

CHRISTOLOGICAL OBSERVATION #2 – The command of Jesus Christ was for His disciples to pray. **22:40**

The verb “pray” in **verse 40** is an imperative meaning it is a command. Jesus commands His people “pray” that you may not enter into temptation. The specific contextual temptation would be to totally and completely defect from Jesus Christ rather than persevere.

The idea behind entering into temptation, which occurs here and at the end of **verse 46**, is the idea of actually giving in to temptation and doing just the opposite of the will of God. To actually enter into temptation is to actually do the evil and participate in sin (i.e. I Tim. 6:9). He is praying that

The prayer that Christ is demanding that His disciples pray is not that the temptation will go away, but that they will not give in to the temptation.

As long as Satan and his forces exist in this world, and as long as we have a sinful flesh nature, there will be temptations. The key to survival is prayer. The prayer is not that there will not be temptation; the prayer is that we do not succumb to the temptation. When we pray we gain strength to resist it and Satan flees (James 4:7).

CHRISTOLOGICAL OBSERVATION #3 – The character of Jesus Christ was that He prayed. **22:41-44**

None of us will ever be able to fully grasp the intense, personal struggle that Jesus Christ went through the night of His betrayal. He was just hours away from the abandonment of His own Father. He was in great turmoil. Dr. Richard Lenski, the German Lutheran Biblical scholar of the late 1800's and early 1900's, really captures this point:

“The agony of Gethsemane will always remain full of mystery for us because of the mystery of the union of Christ's two natures. For one thing, we have no conception of what sin, curse, wrath, death meant for the holy human nature of Jesus. Since He was sinless, he should not die; and yet, because He was sinless and holy he willed to die for our sin. The death of Jesus was far different from that of the courageous martyrs. They died after Jesus' death had removed their sin and guilt; the sting of their death was removed through Christ's death. But Jesus died, being made sin for us, being made a curse for us, the sting of death penetrated him with all its damnable power. The world's sin had, indeed, been assumed by Jesus during his whole life, but here in Gethsemane the supreme moment of that assumption had come. With the coming of Judas and his band Jesus actually stepped into the death that was to atone for the world's sin. All that is horrible, unspeakable, hellish, and damnable is our guilt rose up to meet him, and his whole nature shrank from the contact” (*Luke's Gospel*, p. 1074).

Dr. Lenski is right, we will never grasp all that is involved here at Gethsemane, but one thing we may grasp is when Jesus was in the darkest of hours, He prayed.

He was facing the most severe moment of His life:

- 1) He was facing His grueling death on the cross.
- 2) He was facing the bearing of our sins.
- 3) He was facing becoming a curse for us.
- 4) He was facing the wrath of God.
- 5) He was facing the abandonment of God.

When Jesus faced all of this, His character drove Him to pray. There are five facts regarding His prayer we want to see:

Fact #1 - Christ prayed in a private location. **22:41a**

Christ wanted a private location to pray and He got alone with God privately with His Father. Some trials demand this. Frankly, I think every day demands this.

Fact #2 - Christ prayed in a kneeling position. **22:41b**

Jesus Christ knelt down before His Father to pray. If He did this as second member of the Trinity, then we certainly should.

Fact #3 - Christ prayed with a submissive petition. **22:42**

In Scripture, the “cup” often metaphorically pictured a package of suffering or experiencing the wrath of God (Ps. 11:6; Is. 51:17; Ez. 23:33).

Most would be quick to run to God in prayer if they thought it would help them escape death. But Jesus is going to God knowing He is not only facing death, but God’s wrath.

From a human perspective, He is approximately 33-years-old and He is about to face the wrath of God. It is no wonder He is struggling with this assignment. But He is willing to do God’s will.

When you take that cup of communion into your hands, you had better take that very seriously.

Fact #4 - Christ prayed and received an angelic sustenance. **22:43**

As Jesus was praying, God sent an angel from heaven to strengthen Him. The angel did not remove the cup, but he did strengthen the Lord. This is a very rare Greek word “strengthen.” In fact, Dr. Luke is the only one to use this word here and in Acts 9:19. The word does seem to refer to both physical, emotional and spiritual strength (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 154).

Let’s face it; Jesus was not getting any support from anyone here on this earth. Even those closest to Him were sound asleep. In the aftermath of the angelic appearance, the trial was not removed, but Jesus had the strength to endure the trial.

There is a principle to see from this context. Angelic aid is definitely connected to personal prayer. We may assume from this that lack of prayer will at times equal lack of angelic help.

Fact #5 - Christ prayed in emotional consternation. **22:44**

The idea of praying “in agony” is the idea of praying in a very fearful anguish. The concept of “praying very fervently” is the idea of praying with an intense passion.

This prayer was at such an intense level that drops of sweat were falling off of Jesus just as blood would fall off a person if they were bleeding. This was no ordinary prayer meeting.

The kind of prayer that will keep us from falling is not some quick, random, short prayer that we rifle off toward heaven. It is a very passionate prayer that cries out to God in tough situations and temptations.

We live in a world of instant things—instant coffee, oat meal, pancakes, meals and popcorn. When it comes to prayer, instant won't get the job done.

CHRISTOLOGICAL OBSERVATION #4 – The challenge of Jesus Christ to His disciples is that they pray. **22:45-46**

One of the great evidences of the need to pray, in order to escape temptation and failure, is the example of these Apostles who failed that very night. Contextually, one reason why all these disciples fell is because instead of praying, they were sleeping. Instead of going to God in prayer, they went to bed.

There are many things people do rather than pray. They watch TV; they work; they eat; they play some sport; they study and they sleep. Rarely do God's people spend time in prayer and as a result they are weak and fail. Our failures are our own greatest evidence of our need to pray. As long as we keep neglecting prayer, we will continually fail.

By the way, did these Apostles ever learn the lesson taught to them by Jesus Christ this night? Luke gives us the answer in Acts 6:1-4. These Apostles said, "we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

They finally learned how important prayer was to ministry and life and these Apostles turned the world upside down.

Colossians 4:2 says, "Devote yourselves to prayer." We need prayer warriors. It is the key to survival.

These are devilish times in which we are living. Things are getting darker and darker. You will never survive without prayer. So as Paul says, "Devote yourselves" to it.

The reason why Jesus is in Gethsemane praying is because of what He was about to do for us. He was about to take our sin and God's wrath on Himself so that we might be saved.