

210404 Jesus' Answered Prayer 38/13 April 4, 2021

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Dear Friends,

When you think of Gethsemane, what related thoughts come to mind? If you and I had been with Jesus and the eleven on that last night in the Garden, what might have been our state of mind? What was their state of mind? For years, I puzzled over Jesus' words to the eleven immediately prior to His prayer, "**Pray that ye enter not into temptation.**" If we think of temptation in terms of enticement to indulgent sins of the flesh, Gethsemane is hardly the time or place where such enticements would have been a problem. If we think of how powerfully discouragement and depression weigh down our spirits, including our spiritual vitality, we might well be closer to the lesson.

If Jesus intended to show the eleven His way to help them avoid this kind of problem, this lesson wisely directs us to a spiritual strategy not well understood or used in our day. I fear that much of the unchristian rhetoric we have read or heard from professing, very sincerely professing Christians during the last year may have grown out of this deficiency. Discouragement or depression have a way of tainting the reality of everything in our world with a flavor that ignores or distorts the Lord and His gracious providence in our lives. Jesus knew there was a very good reason for the events of that week, including that night in the Garden, but it was all too much that the disciples didn't want to hear, much less experience. Yes, they would face the darkest season of their lives, but they could not grasp at the moment, especially with their state of discouraged minds, that **Sunday was coming**, and soon!

I am not a believer in discipleship by guilt. We've all met professing believers who were, themselves, controlled more by their sense of guilt than by their love of Jesus, or His love for them. ([2Co 5:14](#)) These misguided souls not only imprison themselves in their prison of guilt, but they work hard to imprison others with them. Years ago I studied a philosophy that claimed Christian faith as its guide to help people with their problems, but it was built more on its use of contrived guilt than on the love of Jesus for His people. If you see your doctor and hear the news that you have cancer, the only reason is that you committed some heinous sin. Never mind surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy. If you really want to be healed of cancer, you need to repent of that sin. They borrowed their philosophy from Job's "Miserable comforters" who pretty much told Job the same thing. Their guilt game begins in [Job 4](#), but continued through most of their vain and empty accusations against Job. In the end, the Lord rejected them and their ways, and Job offered acceptable sacrifices to the Lord for them.

We are, hopefully, beginning to see a better day relative to COVID and its devastating impact on our culture. We need to continue praying for the Lord to give us wise grace in dealing with this medical problem and its risk, especially against older people or those with compromised health conditions that weaken their ability to fight off disease. I have started emphasizing more that we need to study and to practice Biblical, [Php 2](#), esteem other believers better than ourselves kind of authentic Christianity instead of the "Rambo" "Macho" self-promoting faith that ignores the potential impact our conduct might have on others. I really dislike wearing a mask. But if wearing a mask reduces the risk of my passing this virus to another person, I'll wear a mask. By nature, I am an affectionate person. I love to hug the people I love. But if I need to maintain a "Social distance" of six feet from them for the present time, I'll do so rather than increase their risk from contact with me. Prevailing medical advice and [Php 2](#) spiritual ethics should prevail in this situation.

And, while we struggle to see the end of this season, we need Jesus' words, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." The "temptation" to turn our minds and faith from Him to our own fears or paranoia or anger and frustration. Let's work--and pray--long and hard to avoid Christianity by guilt or by discouragement and to grow stronger in [Php 2](#) Christianity by truly, in our words and actions, esteeming our brothers and sisters better than ourselves.

Lord bless, Joe Holder

Jesus' Answered Prayer

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. ([Lu 22:40-44](#) KJV 1900)

Sadly, much speculation has been imposed on this passage over the years. As with any Scripture, we should study carefully what the text says, not inject what we think it says—or want it to say.

Pray that ye enter not into temptation. Why would Jesus use this occasion to remind the disciples to pray that they not enter into temptation? To the end, He was ever concerned for them and their needs. We think of “Temptation” as enticement to commit some sin of the flesh, or to lie or steal.

However, if we adjust our spiritual eyes to Biblical teaching, “Temptation” covers a broader field, including one area the disciples needed at this moment. Consider Paul's “Filter” in this passage.

And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. ([Ro 14:23](#) KJV 1900)

Did you notice that last thought? “...**whatsoever is not of faith is sin**”? Our culture, and necessarily our churches, has just gone through a year of disruption, occasionally bordering on chaos and often struggling with confusion. In social media, one of the few means by which believers could communicate with each other during this time, I have read messages of anger, frustration, divisiveness, and discouragement. Occasionally, I have wanted to simply quote this verse to the writer, a sincere believer who, in “Normal” times (Do we remember them?), would have been gracious and balanced, and ask the simple question, “Is what you wrote **‘of faith’**?” Obviously, it was not. In fact, the content of many of these messages voiced the underlying discouragement and frustration these dear people felt so deeply. Jesus' words apply to us, especially during such times as we have seen through the last year, as emphatically as He applied them to the eleven that night in Gethsemane. Too many naïve believers have **surrendered to their discouragement during this season instead of praying for grace to resist the temptation to discouragement.**

A discouraged, disheartened spirit is fertile soil for Satan to plant any seed of sin or spiritual error he wishes. And it will often grow fast and strong in the discouraged heart. Angry, divisive, accusing, or paranoid (What “They” are thinking or doing to us) posts on social media indicate that Satan has been quite busy during the last year, and sadly effective. Believers today need Jesus' caution, “**Pray that ye enter not into temptation.**” These same dear people would never think of leaping into a disgraceful sin of the flesh, they'd never lie to you or steal from you. But they allowed this one blind spot to form in their spiritual armor, and the adversary moved right through their defenses by exploiting it against them. They honestly likely thought they were being righteously indignant in their actions. But they could not possibly have given a good answer to “Did you write those words in faith?”

Perhaps more than in almost any other season, believers need to be alert when struggling with discouragement. Jesus' words remind us; we definitely need to spend a lot more time in prayer during such times, specifically praying for the Lord to protect us from ourselves.

By the time Jesus and the disciples arrived in Gethsemane that night, the disciples had been exposed to far more information that they could not understand than we can imagine as we read the texts describing the events. Try to imagine living through those events without having a Bible passage to frame the events in the larger picture of Jesus' eventual resurrection and the victory He accomplished

over His/our enemies, and even over our sins. The disciples falling asleep while Jesus prayed was likely more from depression than from physical exhaustion. A common “Escape” for many people during times of intense discouragement is simply to go to sleep and hope it all a bad dream that will be gone when you wake up.

Most people develop their own “Coping strategies” by which they try to deal with their intense stresses. Have you ever heard people honestly talk about their personal coping mechanisms? “I’m a stress eater.” “When I am stressed or discouraged, I can’t think about food. I starve myself.” Personally, when I am faced with an especially stressful season, I look for some kind of physical work to do, something that really demands a major investment of energy. While I busy myself with the physical work, I think and try to pray for the Lord’s help through the situation. Example. Many years ago, my father-in-law had a heart attack. We got him to the hospital and stabilized. It was a major episode, so we would not know for some time if he would survive or how much damage he would have going into the future. Just prior to this event, Sandra and I had decided to refinish our kitchen cabinets. We’d already bought the stain, hardware, and all the supplies we’d need to complete the project. As soon as we got my father-in-law settled and as stable as possible in the hospital, despite it being well into the night, I started sanding and stripping the old varnish off the cabinets at a mad pace. We all develop our own methods for coping. But our best spiritual strategy appears in Jesus’ simple statement, **“Pray that ye enter not into temptation.”** We can use all the coping strategies we wish, but, above all else, in such times we need the Lord’s help to shield us from the adversary’s onslaughts against our weakness.

Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. Did the Father answer Jesus’ prayer? First, do not impose an emotional interpretation onto these words that forces this verse to contradict. Jesus’ words in John’s gospel.

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. ([Joh 12:27](#))

Jesus could not be desperately looking for an escape from His “Hour” and simultaneously be determined to face it. I suggest that Paul (I believe, the author of Hebrews) answers this dilemma.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. ([Heb 5:7](#))

The Greek word translated “from” in this verse conveys the sense of “Out from.” I suggest that Jesus was not praying for avoidance of the cross and death. Rather, He prayed for the Father to deliver Him by raising Him from death after He had completed His “Assignment.”

As we apply the focus of our present study to this lesson, the obvious question arises. “Did the Father answer Jesus’ prayer in the Garden?” And the inspired lesson in [Heb 5:7](#) answers the question. Yes! Did the Father raise Jesus out of death and the grave? Yes He did!

Of course, Jesus’ resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament, all according to God’s eternal purpose for the final salvation of His chosen people. However, we should consider the manner in which [Heb 5:7](#) and context presents these events. The inspired narrative reads that Jesus prayed for deliverance, recorded in all four gospel accounts, if we respect Jesus’ words in [Joh 12:27](#). Why might the Holy Spirit present Jesus’ prayer in this form? I suggest that our gracious God shows us in every way possible that we need to pray with faith and with confidence in His caring response. Pray with the faith-expectation of an answer.

Folks who lean toward various fatalistic philosophies will impose a variety of twists onto the question of answered prayer. Some will deny that God ever answers prayer at all, because He ordained every event from the beginning, so any answer to our prayer would imply that He changed some previously ordained event. This idea contradicts every passage in the Bible that provides an inspired account of

godly people praying and receiving answers from the Lord.

On the other end of the prayer denying spectrum we see the “Prayer really changes us, not God.” If we pray in faith, we should change by the exercise. However, the implication that answering a prayer from His hurting, praying child in some way changes God is a false concept. We do things because of our basic nature and disposition. If we chose to do nothing under specific circumstances, our doing nothing would itself contradict our basic disposition. The same is true of our God. If we in faith believe what God reveals of Himself to us in Scripture, including His intent to include in those Scriptures multiple accounts of prayers and His answers, those inspired Scriptures lead us to the undeniable conclusion that God does intervene in human lives and answer prayers from His children **because of His Fatherly, caring love for His children.**

The New Testament continuously teaches us that Jesus is our example in all matters spiritual. That truth de facto teaches us that, as the Father answered Jesus’ prayer in the Garden, He also answers the prayers of His children who pray to Him in faith. Jesus framed his answer to this question in the form of a question.

And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? ([Lu 18:7-8](#))

These verses answer our question in Jesus’ own words. They form Jesus’ concluding focused lesson to His lesson of the “Importunate Widow.” Remember. Jesus framed the story that He wanted to tell to teach the lesson He intended to teach. In the “Story” He told, the widow had only one method to gain a judgment in her case, her persistent voice. She continually plead with the judge, who eventually granted her request. God’s response to His people’s prayers, according to Jesus in these verses, is to “... **avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him.**” His avenging is His response to their prayers, just as His response in [Lu 11:13](#), as a caring Father to His children who ask Him to supply their needs. Does God answer prayer? Yes! Did He answer Jesus’ prayer! Indeed He did! Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Elder Joe Holder