

The Preparation For A Hard Work



Luke 22:39-46

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“And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him. And 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 Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done.” Now 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 rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”” Luke 22:39-46, NASB.

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Luke 22:39 Maintaining The Habit Of Prayer - Devotions

God has been strongly impressing these verses on my heart these past few days. Even last night on television there was a movie which depicted a situation where David entered into temptation. So the question follows, “What does it mean to ‘enter into temptation.’” “What is the difference between entering temptation and entering any other situation?”

Evidently from Jesus’ own prayer and his following circumstances, we can easily conclude this environment of temptation is not to be equivocated with certain difficult situations for Jesus clearly went through the most trying situations possible. The disciples and Jesus both went through terrible times in the following days.

The difference shows up in their own response to certain situations, whether they be easy or hard. Entering temptation means to go into a situation with a frame of heart and mind lacking the discernment coming from God’s will to properly respond to challenges to the soul. By praying that I may not enter temptation, I still might go through the same circumstances but when I go through them, my heart is in such a sensitive way before the Lord that I can discern the issues before me in light of my love and duty towards God.

I can see that a certain convenient compromise encouraged by my buddies is also plain disobedience before the Lord. And because of that primary devotion to God, I make decisions favoring obedience to Him rather than for myself whether it be self-pleasure, security, or even self-esteem. Nothing is more important than my faithfulness before God. Prayer is essential preparation for the soul. Without it, we go unguarded into a disastrous fight. We have not even discerned what the basic needs are.

Jesus stated what He preferred. He wanted the cup to be taken away from Him. This doesn't sound like a great commitment to God's will, but we should remember again man's nature. The physical body is loathe to pain and discomfort. It rightly seeks protection for itself. We don't look for pain and misery. We don't desire to be separated from our loved ones. Jesus wasn't at all blind to what it would cost Him. He, like you and me, preferred not to go through the ordeal if it wasn't necessary. If it didn't perfectly meet God's will, He would not have needed to go through it.

Perhaps He thought of Isaac as the last moment being spared from His father's dagger and the ram suffering the blow instead. But alas, Jesus was the lamb.

Application

We should always pray not to enter temptation. Even the Lord's prayer exhorts us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Without prayer we evidently will enter into this situation, or at least we will enter into it without the needed discernment and strength to see the plot and walk through it without harm. In my own situation of unsettledness and wondering whether a good opportunity of service will ever open up, I can easily fall prey to temptation.

I must steadfastly pray that I become not prey.

Lord, keep me from entering temptation. Let not my will be so weak that I drift into dangerous zones of temptation. Help me now so that I might not fall. While I am strong, I beseech Thee to be gracious to me. Keep me from temptation even as you did my Lord. He went through the rough situation but it never turned into temptation because He stayed unreservedly faithful to you. Your will was more important than His pleasure. Beyond this, I realize the stronger I am, the more you can use me to be a comforter to the hurt.

Application

How often is it that we actually pray alone before God? Do we value that privacy before God? And are really baring our souls out before Him or just verbalizing nice-sounding words? Some have to go for a walk, some wake up in the middle of the night, but whenever and wherever it might be, they value prayer with God.

Jesus knelt down when He prayed. Interesting Jesus kneels down to pray here. Often Hebrews stand with hands lifted up while they pray. This was not a particular time of praise or intercession for others. He seemed largely to be searching His own soul and His willingness to obey. The posture of prayer is not nearly as important as the actual prayer, but we need to remember that often our posture will influence to some degree our attitude in that time of prayer. Some godly people have prayer closets or prayer pillows. They place them under their knees not behind their heads!

Application

I have a big chair in the dungeon where we are staying near my desk. Somehow it is the greatest chair to kneel before. I should probably call it the kneeling chair. And the posture in this particular place adds to my inward search before the Lord. Even after this study I will bow my heart before the Lord to teach me the precious things He is now teaching me. Jesus was praying. The Greek imperfect tense strongly emphasizes the continual action of Jesus' prayer. He didn't just say one short prayer and then join the others in this special time just before His departure. No, Jesus kept praying. He was bowed down in heart praying.

Application

We all need to sense that greater need to pray. As Paul says, we must pray without ceasing. We are vitally dependent on what the Lord is doing. He told us to seek Him for things. We also need time to meditate before Him and clear our souls of the cobwebs of doubt or despair. He will refreshen and strengthen us with His sufficient grace.

yet not My will

'Yet not My will' is a most interesting phrase and can be translated in more fluid ways such as 'however' or 'but whatever the case.' Jesus affirms in a much stronger way that He in the end did not want to fulfill His own desires at the cost of not fulfilling His Father's will. The Father's will needed to be done; it had priority. He could understand His personal feelings. I can too. No one in His right mind would want to suffer such harm and abuse. But another one whose opinion and will meant everything asked Him to go. We can see through these verses what God's love means.

Jesus' love does not consist of those squeamish feelings of adoration. Those feelings didn't drive Him to the cross. We were unlovely. His friends even left Him in His deepest time of hurt. Jesus died on the cross because He was devoted to doing His Father's will. So John says,

*“For this is the love of God,
that we keep His commandments? (1 Jn 5:3).*

Love is bound up more in the word loyalty than unstable feelings of love. Love, of course, does possess the virtues of loyalty, but our society doesn't seem to appreciate this. Pledges of love now mean to the couples that they at that time love their mates, but it doesn't speak of the future because it is no longer made with loyalty. Originally it did. The Lord's will is to be done and not just admired.

We like Jesus should always place our requests in the conditional state, 'but if...' We need to know that it is always best in the long run that our desires conform with His will rather than Him conforming to ours. We should always be perfectly calm in telling God what wholesome things we would like and what evil things we would not like to bear. We need to check up on the depth of our love toward God.

Come before Him and tell Him of our loyalty to Him. Tell Him that our love for Him means our unconditional pledge of obedience even if we don't like it.

Let's without complaint get down to the hard work of the kingdom of God. Let nothing be more precious to us than the willingness to do our Father's will. Jesus gave everything. Everything I have is His; His life serves as my impeccable model. No sound of laughter as Jesus' body shook under extreme pressure. Real prosperity and happiness can never be grasped unless I fight the struggles of putting myself and my pleasures in line of priority of obedience to the Father. Help me.

*Let me struggle my way into your kingdom rather than cruise
into the paths of hell.*

Habits are so important to maintaining correct behavior during difficult times. They keep us doing the right things even if pressure and difficulties try to hinder us. Jesus set a pattern of finding solitude wherever He was so that He could pray. This is the reason daily devotions stand to be so crucial in our lives. They set a regular time we are alone with the Lord exposing our soul whether it be in praise or in despair. We come to Him bringing our problems and delights. Because of this routine, no matter what mood we might encounter, we find ourselves before our gracious Lord. He teaches, comforts, directs and helps us. Right now, Linda's parents are both sick. Mom is in the hospital. Nana is ready to be subjugated to the care of some nursing home. Our future is less sure than anytime since when we returned. Is the Lord asking us to care for her parents? Is the Lord going to send us off to the north of Chicago? Am I going to study? Will we be doing what we are now doing next month? Today, I come as Jesus went to the garden, that is, from routine. However, I also am trusting to meet Him. He will care for me. Praise the Lord I have the support of my wife.

Luke 22:40 Believing In The Effectiveness of Prayer

“Pray that you may not enter into temptation” After Jesus got there, Jesus warns them to pray specifically that they might not enter into temptation. The master was wise enough to see the needs of the disciples.

Jesus would of course pray for them, but they also needed to pray. The discipline of prayer becomes the individual Christian’s responsibility. Satan’s forces are not to be jested at; they are real. We will see how much they were following Jesus. Were they only physically following Him by tracing His footsteps? But would they pray as Jesus prayed. Would they discern the dangers of the coming events? We must pray that we might not enter into temptation. The more we are engaged on a strategic work, the more Satan will be busy laying traps for us. Prayer does make a difference. Beseeching God for wisdom, loyalty and courage brings about unknown resources from God’s warehouse. We might not see it, but it is present. The despondent disciples fell to despair because of their disloyalty and the vanquishing promise after Jesus got caught, but prayer would make a difference if they indeed heeded Jesus’ warning.

Lord please keep me from temptation. Sure, many great ones have fallen, but I am praying ‘keep me from entering temptation.’ Lord may my passion be so inflamed, my wisdom ever-increasing and my openness ever more transparent that I might be like Jesus, faithful and holy. Amen.

Luke 22:41 Confirming Our Commitment To Prayer Doing

Jesus wanted solitude even from His disciples. Jesus went beyond the others about a stone throw away from His disciples. Perhaps if they were anxious to pray or could depend on prayer as much as Jesus, He would have invited them to join him. But there is nothing like privacy when we bear our souls before the Lord. Our prayers should be so deep and reflective of our situation and thoughts that we would be afraid to pray certain things in front of others. But never should we feel afraid to bring them before our Lord.

Luke 22:42 Acknowledging Our Obedience In Prayer Demand

Jesus significantly prayed to the Father even as He had bid us to do (Mt 6:9). There is none other which is able to help us. The Father’s will (desires) became most consequential for Jesus. Jesus knew what He wanted. He knew He didn’t want to drink that cup. That cup is a often used symbol in the Old Testament for God’s wrath. Perhaps it was blood that God wanted; life that was required to meet God’s judgment. Whatever, Jesus knew it was something extremely hard to bear.

It is not that our desires are wrong in themselves. But Jesus realized that His desires is not all that counted, but whether they were to complement, yes, even fulfill what God would prefer. This deep desire to do what God wanted is the reason Jesus begins His prayer with ‘if you will.’ Never does He want His will to differ from His Father’s. And neither should we.

Luke 22:43 Seeing God’s Answer To Prayer Answer

Some people get very uncomfortable when they hear about angels. Perhaps their childhood image was somehow trampled on by some modern critic, but in fact an angel here ministers to Jesus. Actually some of the ancient manuscripts lack verses 43-44 (ie. A B T W 1071*). That the other gospel accounts don’t mention this particular description perhaps is indicative of its originality. One can also suppose that because of fear from the influence of Gnosticism that they just avoided these verses. It is hard to say. We will assume its validity for the time being. We are not afraid of angels ministering to Jesus. They did so after His temptation. There is no reason for excluding them from this temptation.

There are at least two differences between Matthew 4:11 and this verse Luke 22:43. Matthew records several angels ministering to Him while here Luke records one single angel assisting Jesus. The other difference remains in their assistance. Matthew 4 says the angels were serving or ministering (*diakono*) while here that one angel was strengthening Jesus. The

difference can be seen in the need. Jesus had to go it alone; the angel's help seemed temporary. He wasn't to be stationed over Jesus in any apparent way, but He could strengthen Jesus as He submitted His will to God the Father.

Jesus was exhausted from such deep emotional pains. He the Holy One would become the substitute for man's hideous sin. He for the first time would be separated from His Father. Jesus didn't need to eat; He hadn't fasted that evening but feasted. Now tomorrow He would be slain. He needed an angel to give Him extra strength. He would meet death's ugly face the next day.

Application

We need to take comfort in God's timing. He will comfort us when we need it the most. He strengthens when we need to be strengthened. We must not forget that the angel strengthened Him after His prayer and not before. The angel no doubt was a clear expression of God's answer to prayer. Jesus needed to be strengthened so not to enter into temptation. And so we need to pray. We should not expect angels to pop in whenever we need it. No, angels' ministry is encouraged or hampered by the amount of prayer we lift before God. And when we pray, we can expect God's matching comfort. He will provide for our very deepest needs.

Luke 22:44 Persevering Through The Emotional Difficulties Of Prayer - Depth

There are many things we don't understand about our heavenly Father, and one of them is very explicitly mentioned in this verse. An amazing amount of tension and agony was gripping Jesus' own heart. Prayer doesn't always bring release and peace! Instead prayer confronts us with the clarity of God's will. Sometimes God's will is pleasant, but sometimes it isn't easy.

Those dedicated to 'prosper and success' theology don't always understand the difficult things God has decided to implement. They are riding on the crest of a prosperous generation which can isolate itself from the hurts of the ministry. Jesus was in a bad way. Ministry does not focus on one's own needs but on the needs of those around. The English does a fairly good job of reflecting the somewhat causal character of this verse. Jesus was in a state of agony (lit. *agonia*).

"Being in a state of agony, he prayed fervently..." Our condition, whether bodily or in terms of surroundings, often influence the depth of our prayers. Jesus' premonition of the oncoming slaughter seemed to drive a spear down his soul. Sweat was literally dripping from his body. It seems that it was sweat alone that was dripping from Christ's body rather than blood or sweat mixed with blood. A comparison of blood in big clots splashing all over the ground was being used to emphasize the heaviness of sweat. This was more than a pile up of beads of perspiration. The intensity of His struggle revealed the depth to which He was willing to go for the sinners He would shortly die for. If it cost Jesus this much, how could anything we bear even begin to match this. We owe Him our life, and when we gave it to Him, we surrendered that very life we once possessed. How crucial we struggle so much to accomplish God's will especially when it is so hard for us to do.

Luke 22:45-46 Encouraging Others To The Task Of Prayer - Need

Prayer doesn't go on forever. Preparation for battle comes to an end. The battle does begin. The confrontation must start. Jesus rose up from prayer, ready as much as He would ever be. He is willing to go through the suffering because of His devotion to do His Father's will.

After prayer, we must meet our hard circumstances. They must not be avoided. Confrontation should not always be avoided for it might be the very thing God has planned. The disciples slept from weariness, but they should have prayed. Jesus was ready for the Tempter's plot; the disciples, though rested in body, were not refreshed. They didn't get the strengthening by the angel. They slept. They would have to go through this ordeal without the crucial

preparation of prayer. Whenever we switch the priority of prayer, then our prayers will consist of confession. This seems to have happened to the disciples.

Prayer is sometimes more critically needed than sleep. Was Jesus angry at the lack of prayer hardiness in the disciples? Or was He sad to see them sleep instead of pray because of the sin they would travel through? Or was He thinking of the lack of loyalty and companionship He most desperately wanted? Although the lack of His disciples perseverance did not encourage Him, we find that He is more concerned with their own predicament (example of humility). He again commands them to pray that they might not enter into temptation.

He knows of the fight coming and that they will be tossed to and fro in Satan's surge of forces. The battles in the kingdom of God are never meant for God's children to go through without the forces of God's angels. And never will we be able to discern God's will unless we have committed our own hearts and the oncoming situation in His hands. Prayer becomes our time of putting on the armor and our arena of fighting. Never should we stand against the evil one on our own. But we need to take courage even when we fail to pray. We can pray even though we have neglected earlier prayer. Even as Jesus was talking to the disciples and exhorting them to prayer again, Jesus was taken (Luke 22:47). The point is clear. Prayer must continue right through the battle.

Luke 22: 39 Maintaining The Habit Of Prayer - Devotions

During the last week of His life, Jesus lived in Jerusalem, but at nighttime He needed to leave the city. Security reasons demanded this inconvenience. This was His routine or practice. But there seems to be another reason He left that crowded city, and that reason was to preserve his solitude for prayer. We shouldn't just focus on the fact of His leaving, but also on His destination. The Garden of Gethsemane was at the Mount of Olives. Part of the mount was reserved for the four markets where people could buy approved sacrifices for sacrifices.

This garden became the fifth market where Christ volunteered Himself to be sacrificed on man's behalf. The temple was probably within site as it stood on the highest part of Jerusalem. Christ knew the sufferings of the Servant (Isaiah 53) were soon to begin. He was hard pressed. His disciples haphazardly follow. They didn't understand Christ's talk of dying. They couldn't sympathize with the oppression settling around Jesus' heart. Their following all the more emphasized how alone He was there in the garden. These disciples would flee when trouble brewed. They didn't come to comfort Jesus or even to pray for Jesus. The word order suggests almost ironically and emphasis on the word 'disciples.'. This incident shows the real qualities of the disciples.

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ...With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit... . (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Summary

Let's pray. It's not to late. Even if we find ourselves in the midst of an oppressive battle, let us pray. God's forces are awaiting our petitions. Let's be strong in the Lord. Let not weariness of body, depression of spirit, tiredness of emotions, etc. provide an excuse for lack of prayer. But may not the ever-present opportunity of prayer become an excuse for the lack of praying now. If anything, we realize the more we have entered into a difficult situation, the more difficult it is to pray

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When we find ourselves facing a real difficult time, how do we respond? We often are very inconsistent. We often don't even know what the best thing to do is, and though we sometimes do know, we don't even do it.

A study of Jesus' own life uncovers many important principles to help us in our daily walk. In this passage, He faced the toughest assignment in the world. He had to give His life up for some sinners. It hurt. He lacked loyal backups. The struggle is natural; it's the survival instinct. In a special way our Lord will comfort us and care for our tears and fragile bodies. We need only to focus all our reserves on coming before God's presence. Jesus knew this to be His only hope and comfort in these tragic times. Let's see what we can learn from His labor of prayer.