

The Gospel of Luke (#100); Jesus in Gethsemane

The passage of Luke's Gospel that we desire to consider today tells of Jesus and His disciples traveling out of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives. Perhaps it was when they were making their way out of the city our Lord gave His followers a few words of exhortation, the final words to them before He was arrested, tried, and crucified. We then read of the great distress and travail of His soul as He prayed to His Father while in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what was before Him. Here is Luke 22:35 through 46:

³⁵And He said to them, "When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?"

So they said, "Nothing."

³⁶Then He said to them, "But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. ³⁷For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' For the things concerning Me have an end."

³⁸So they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords."

And He said to them, "It is enough."

³⁹Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

⁴¹And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." ⁴³Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

⁴⁵When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. ⁴⁶Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

As we consider these verses, we might propose this outline:

1. Jesus spoke His final words to His disciples (22:35-38)
2. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray regarding the trial that was before them (22:39, 40)
3. Jesus prayed for Himself and for His Father's will (22:41-44)
4. Jesus upbraided His disciples for their prayerlessness (22:45-46)

I. Jesus spoke His final words to His disciples (22:35-38)

We read in verse 35, "***He said to them, 'When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?'***" We read their response, "***So they said, 'Nothing.'***"

Jesus was referring to the short-term mission to which He had sent His apostles earlier in His ministry. After He had called and commissioned twelve of His disciples as His apostles, He sent them forth on a mission within Israel with specific instruction. This is recorded in Matthew 10:5-15, which reads as follows:

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. ⁶But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' ⁸Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. ⁹Provide neither gold nor silver nor

copper in your money belts, ¹⁰nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food.

¹¹“Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. ¹²And when you go into a household, greet it. ¹³If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. ¹⁵Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!

Jesus appealed to His disciples that God the Father in His providence had provided for all of their needs and had given them protection in their earlier missionary journey. Even those who had refused and failed to respond to their message that the promised kingdom of God was at hand, did not accost them directly or physically. The past experience of these disciples had taught them that their Lord would guide them, provide for them, and enable them to fulfill that to which He had called Him.

The Lord asked this question of these men, “When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?”, so that they would always recall the kind and careful watch care they had enjoyed in their service to Him. That earlier mission was for the primary purpose of announcing to the people of Israel the arrival of the kingdom of God. But it had another, secondary purpose, in that it was also a means to prepare His disciples for their future service. They had learned that they could depend on God’s providence and that those who received them and their message to provide for them.

When the Lord takes us through hard times, times of deprivation, let us recall the faithful and continual provision that He has always shown us in the past, lest we become disheartened and wrongly feel abandoned by Him. When you face difficulty before you, do you hear the Lord asking you, “In the past, did you lack anything?” May we answer that question as the apostles did on this occasion, “No, we lacked nothing.”

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) drew some applications for the Lord’s people.

Note, [1] it is good for us often to review the providences of God that have been concerning us all our days, and to observe how we have got through the straits and difficulties we have met with. [2] Christ is a good Master, and His service a good service; for though His servants may sometimes be brought low, yet He will help them; and though He *try* them, yet will He not leave them. *Jehovah-jireh*. [3] We must reckon ourselves well done by, and must not complain, but be thankful, if we have had the necessary supports of life, though we have had neither dainties nor superfluities, though we have lived from hand to mouth, and lived upon the kindness of our friends. The disciples lived upon contribution, and yet did not complain that their maintenance was precarious, but owned, to their Master’s honour, that it was sufficient; they had wanted (needed) nothing.

But now our Lord gave His disciples different instruction. Things were about to change. It would be different than what they had formerly experienced. “The future will not be as easy for the disciples as the past.”¹ We read in **Luke 22:36**. “***Then He said to them, ‘But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.’***” Whereas before they did not need to concern themselves with their provision, from this point forward they would conduct a rather different and more difficult mission. The Lord was forewarning His disciples that their future would be beset by extreme difficulty. Up until this time, the people received them and fed them. But now that Jesus Himself would be regarded by all as being the most despicable kind of fellow, because they are associated with Him, they would also suffer difficulty and deprivation.

But it was also because Jesus would soon leave them and no longer be the chief object of scorn and abuse that Jesus prepared His disciples for life after His departure.

¹ R. C. Sproul, gen. ed., **The Reformation Study Bible** (Thomas Nelson Pub., 1995), 1648.

Jesus opens the discussion by informing The Eleven that they are about to be confronted with a situation totally different than heretofore. Up to now He had fully assumed the responsibility of caring for them. And the enemies had aimed their poisoned arrows mainly at *Him*. From now on things would be different. For this change they must prepare themselves.²

Now there are varied interpretations and reactions to Jesus' instruction, "***and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.***" A simple understanding of this statement is that Jesus would have His disciples prepared for the possible need for self-defense. Clearly it does not intimate of future offensive aggression by His apostles in furthering the kingdom of God. Later that night Jesus would respond to Pontius Pilate about the nature of the kingdom of God. Jesus declared to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here" (John 18:36).

But there are some, because they react and reject the principle of self-defense for the Christian, they spiritualize our Lord's instruction, declaring that our Lord was not speaking literally of obtaining a sword. There is even a footnote in the Reformation Study Bible that says of our Lord's reference to a sword, "This is probably not meant literally (cf. vs. 49-51; Matt. 26:51, 52), but is a way of saying that they face a dangerous future." But that Jesus was speaking of self-defense seems clear when He said that the two swords they had was enough (v. 38b). And later in the world-wide expansion of the gospel in the Roman world, they would encounter danger in their travels due to thieves and criminals. Paul wrote of his own experience, that he had been "in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:26). There would be occasions when self-defense might be necessary.

Now what about this matter of self-defense? Some argue that because we are to be willing to suffer and not to resist evil, we should be wholly passive and willing to receive whatever kind of abuse that injustice may impose upon us by the fallen world. "After all", they reason, "did not Jesus instruct us 'But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also' (Matt. 5:39)? And does not our Lord's rebuke of Peter who cut off the ear of Malchus in the Garden of Gethsemane mitigate against using the sword?"

How do we respond to this? It would seem that when we consider the subject of self-defence, we should distinguish between how we respond and react with respect to the furtherance of the gospel and the advancement of the kingdom of God and how we respond and react as responsible citizens with the civil arena. Personally, although it is difficult to know how one would react in a tense situation, I would be very reluctant to act in defence of myself, if it would result in the potential of maiming severely or killing an assailant. But what I would not hesitate to affirm is the responsibility, even duty, to come to the defence or rescue of a helpless or vulnerable victim of crime or violence. If you slapped my cheek, by the grace of God I would offer you my other cheek, but if you were to slap my wife's cheek, you could expect a different response from me. Throughout the Holy Scriptures people of faith and courage have rescued of the weak and vulnerable, delivering them from what threatened them or their livelihood, and in having done so, they were commended for their actions.

With regard to our Christian witness of the gospel and our efforts to advance the kingdom of God in the world, we should be willing to suffer and endure hardship patiently as we make known Jesus Christ to a dying world. For the Christian it is an honor and blessing to suffer for Christ's sake. When the Jewish leadership arrested and had beaten Peter and John, we read that "when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." (Acts 5:40f). And Peter wrote of the unjust suffering of the Lord's people in 1 Peter 4:12ff,

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that

² William Hendriksen, **New Testament Commentary, Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke** (Baker Academic, 1978), 975.

when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

¹⁷For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸Now

“If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?”

¹⁹Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (1 Petr 4:12-19)

There is no word of retaliation or violence in response to being abused for our Christian witness. We should be willing to suffer patiently for the cause of the gospel even when we suffer hardship and persecution of our witness of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

But what our role and responsibilities as citizens in the secular state in which we live? This brings other matters into consideration. Are we to be willing to suffer the abuses and the criminal actions of wicked, violent people who prey upon people in our society? Of course in our culture it is inevitable that the subject arises regarding the possession and use of guns by the citizens of a nation. Our Founding Fathers viewed the greatest threat to the liberty of the citizenry of any nation is the corruption of that nation's government. They regarded the second amendment to the Constitution as a safeguard, in order to maintain and preserve a free society. The second amendment was to assure that the government could not strip away the liberties of citizens. It reads,

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Just several weeks ago we passed the 250th anniversary of the onset of the Revolutionary War in America. It was due to the action of citizens to prevent the British government from seizing its supplies of ammunition and gun powder in the town of Concord. The British in their efforts to control their subjects of New England moved to disarm them, thereby preventing any insurrection against their tyrannical rule. The second amendment to our constitution was formulated with this historical occurrence in mind. One of our Founding Fathers, **Alexander Hamilton** (1755/1757–1804), wrote of this matter in the *Federalist*, #29:

“the representatives of the people betray their constituents” and the people must exert “that original right of self-defense...against the usurpations of the national rulers.” When the “usurpers, clothed with the forms of legal authority,” oppose the people, it is clear which side Hamilton defends. The best defense against a standing federal army turned against the people is “a large body of citizens, little, if at all, inferior to them in discipline and the use of arms, who stand ready to defend their own rights and those of their fellow-citizens” (*Federalist* no. 29). As Madison wrote, an armed population forms a barrier against a government's “enterprises of ambition.”

Through history virtually every oppressive regime in order to assume or retain power have passed laws to disarm the citizenry. Joseph Stalin confiscated weapons in the Soviet Union in 1929, which then allowed him to slaughter 20 million of its citizens. Pol Pot confiscated guns in Cambodia in 1956 which then resulted in the murder of half of his population—2 million souls. Adolf Hitler outlawed guns in 1938 and 13 million souls were then murdered. Mao Tse Tung took the guns away from his citizens in 1935 and then 20 to 30 million Chinese were murdered.

We could go to the biblical record and see that through history tyrants and oppressors have sought to disarm the people they desired to subjugate to their power. We read in the days of the Judges that the Israelites had no weapons or even farm tools that might be used as weapons. We read,

Now there was no blacksmith to be found throughout all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, “Lest the Hebrews make swords or spears.”²⁰ But all the Israelites would go down to the Philistines to sharpen each man’s plowshare, his mattock, his ax, and his sickle;²¹ and the charge for a sharpening was a pim for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to set the points of the goads.²² So it came about, on the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people who were with Saul and Jonathan. But they were found with Saul and Jonathan his son. (1 Sam. 13:19-22)

Moreover, it can be shown to be a pattern in history that when a people loses its freedom and experiences tyranny, even after the Lord has been sought to deliver and restore liberty, it is only gained through violence and waging warfare against tyranny that freedom is obtained or renewed. In every instance of deliverance from oppression in the period of the Judges, it involved warfare against oppressors in order to restore and obtain the liberty and security of the people.

An armed, law-abiding citizenry is a preservative of society. I have travelled in countries in which gun ownership is largely prohibited and in those places generally violence and lawlessness prevail. Even Americans that may be most anti-gun in their own thinking may not realize the benefit they enjoy from living in a land with self-armed citizens. The reason that there are not more home invasions, than there are presently, is because criminals may not know if the home they would target has not an armed homeowner.

An armed citizenry also prevents much crime from occurring.

- Guns prevent an estimated 2.5 million crimes a year, or 6,849 every day. Most often, the gun is never fired, and no blood (including the criminal’s) is shed.
- Every year, 400,000 life-threatening violent crimes are prevented using firearms.
- 60 percent of convicted felons admitted that they avoided committing crimes when they knew the victim was armed. Forty percent of convicted felons admitted that they avoided committing crimes when they thought the victim might be armed.
- Felons report that they avoid entering houses where people are at home because they fear being shot.
- Fewer than 1 percent of firearms are used in the commission of a crime.³

With respect to preventing crimes from occurring, it has been shown that armed, responsible, law-abiding citizens of the United States prevent more crime than do armed law enforcement officers. Now as a side note, we might say a word regarding the law enforcement officers of our land. Again, I have travelled quite extensively, and I have witnessed the lack of courtesy and professionalism and have witnessed acts of injustice by law enforcement officers in other lands. But here in America, and granted, there are unjust people in every arena of labor, there is a common display of courtesy and professionalism by our law enforcement officers that is special and exemplary, that people in other lands would greatly value and appreciate.

But the point we wish to underscore is that a man or woman who has the means and ability to prevent assault upon their families or upon innocent citizens is a great deterrent to criminal and violent behavior. The principle abides reflected by our Lord’s words to His disciples, “***he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.***” If we have the ability, then we have the duty to protect and defend the weak and helpless, especially those whom God has entrusted directly to our care.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) addressed verse 36 similarly, but more broadly. Again, verse 36 reads, “***Then He said to them, ‘But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.’***” Ryle wrote these words:

³ Foundation for Economic Freedom, <https://fee.org/articles/guns-prevent-thousands-of-crimes-every-day-research-show/>

The general drift of this verse is to teach that from the time of Christ's ascension into heaven, the disciples must not expect such a constant miraculous interposition of God on their behalf, as would make them independent of the use of means. On the contrary they must diligently employ all lawful and reasonable means for their support and protection. They were to "work with their own hands," as Paul did at tent making. They were to have regular gatherings of money for support of those that wanted (needed), as the Corinthians had. They were not to despise their rights as subjects and citizens, but to use them in their own defense, as St. Paul did before Lysias and Festus, and at Philippi.

The general purport of the verse appears to be a caution against the indolent and fanatical notion that diligence in the use of means is "carnal," and an unlawful dependence on an arm of flesh. To my own mind the whole verse supplies an unanswerable argument against the strange notions maintained by some in the present day, who tell us that making provision for our families is wrong,--and insuring our lives is wrong,--and collecting money for religious societies is wrong, --and studying for the work of the ministry is wrong,--and taking part in civil government is wrong, --and supporting police, standing armies, and courts of law is wrong. I respect the conscientiousness of those who maintain these opinions. But I am utterly unable to reconcile them with our Lord's language in this place.⁴

Let us return to the text. Jesus indicated that the conditions under which His apostles labored would change considerably. Jesus declared, "***For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me***" (v. 37). Jesus' disciples must soon give more careful and thorough preparation for their ministry. The reason that Jesus gave for this change of affairs was because of what must be accomplished regarding Him as set forth in the Holy Scriptures. Specifically, Jesus quoted Isaiah 53:12, which reads, "And He was numbered with the transgressors." That Jesus would be numbered "with the transgressors" means that He would be regarded as a transgressor. The People would regard Him to have been as guilty and deserving of death as all other transgressors of God's laws. When Jesus died upon the cross, crucified between two thieves who deserved their punishment, as admitted by one of them, all of the people regarded and thereafter regarded Jesus as equally culpable. The people would have also assumed and regarded Jesus as having been forsaken by God who had permitted Him to suffer such indignity and misery in His death. To be a follower of this One, therefore, would also have been regarded by unbelievers as scandalous and revealed their own miserable condition before God.

When Jesus said, "***For the things concerning Me have an end***" (v. 37b), He was intimating that He would soon complete that which He was called and sent by His Father to accomplish, even the redemption of His people. The "end" to which He was referring was later expressed by Him on His cross when He cried out, "It is finished", and then He expired. It would seem that our Lord was expressing His anticipation and expectation that all that He had to endure and experience was about to be completed, about to come to an end.

And so it is with some of the Lord's people regarding their own hardship and difficulties. We should not be surprised if we face great hardship and difficulty in this life. If our Lord did so in His purity and innocency, what of us who do nothing to deserve any less than what we encounter. We are not better than our Lord and we should not expect better treatment or and existence in this fallen world than what He Himself experienced. The servant is not more deserving than his Master. And if we desire to be glorified with Him, then we may anticipate suffering in ways like Him. But thankfully, there is "an end" to what you are presently suffering and enduring. "*They will have an end, and will end well, everlastingly well*" (Matthew Henry).

In verse 38 we read of the disciples' response to Jesus' instruction to sell their garment, if need be, to buy a sword. They said to Him, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And then Jesus said to them, "It is enough." Clearly Jesus was not intending them to understand that through the use of swords their kingdom work would advance. But it seems that the apostles at this stage of their walk did not understand fully the implications of what Jesus had been teaching them. It was with what might seem to have been a word of resignation that Jesus said to them, "It is enough."

⁴ J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on the Gospels; Luke, vol. 2** (Banner of Truth Trust, 1986, first pub. 1858), 417f.

II. Jesus instructed His disciples to pray regarding the trial that was before them (22:39, 40)

We read in Luke 22:39 and 40 these words,

³⁹Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

The Lord and His eleven apostles arrived at the Mount of Olives, which lie just east of the city walls of northern Jerusalem. The city and the Jewish temple were clearly observable from this place. The Garden of Gethsemane was located on the hillside. Although Luke did not mention the Garden by name, both the Gospels of Mark and Matthew state that it was here that Jesus had led His disciples to pray.

When they arrived at this place, Jesus first instructed His disciples that they were to pray. He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” What may we learn from our Lord and these events? Lessons may come to us in the form of both warnings and instruction.

We learn from these few words of our Savior that we must pray to escape temptation before temptation comes. Jesus said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” Following Jesus does not ensure that you will not experience trial and temptation. No, rather, you will probably face trials as a disciple of Jesus that you would never have experienced had you never begun to follow Jesus. In some ways, life may be easier for the non-Christian than for the Christian.

Now, when we are in the midst of temptation, thankfully, we can pray to escape out of it. But ***it is much better to pray that you never enter the place of temptation than have to pray to get out of it.*** Jesus said to His disciples, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” But how many of us do this?

“Temptations” may come upon us in many forms. (1) They may come as “testings” or challenges to your faith, perhaps intellectual challenges in your thinking that seem to mitigate against the truth of the Scriptures. Perhaps you encounter reproach being cast upon you for being a believer. Or (2) these trials may come as temptations to sin—to covet, lie, steal, cheat, avenge yourself, indulge yourself.

The Lord knew that a trial was about to come upon His disciples, so He instructed them to pray before the trial came upon them. The Lord knows that a situation could arise soon for you, maybe tomorrow, which may or may not be a cause of temptation to you. It will not be a cause of stumbling for you, if you are prepared by prayer. It will be a greater problem if you are ill-prepared because of prayerlessness. As the hymn says,

“What needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!”

III. Jesus prayed for Himself and for His Father’s will (22:41-44)

After Jesus had instructed His disciples to pray for themselves, He withdrew from them in order to pray regarding Himself. We read these words,

And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴²saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” ⁴³Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. ⁴⁴And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Our Lord prayed with confidence in His Father’s ability to remove from Him what was before Him. Jesus prayed for Himself. How much more do we need to pray for ourselves and one another! Neither we nor wicked men are in control of the events of our lives; rather, our Father in heaven orders our existence. We have an example from our Lord Jesus to pray to the Father for assistance and deliverance. Peter would

later write: “The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations” and so we should pray to Him that He would do so. We need not look about in despair at the circumstances we find ourselves in as though we are at the mercy of merciless forces and men; we may come to our Sovereign God and plead His help.

Nevertheless, we see that it is not always the Father’s will that we be spared from suffering. Jesus appended His request with His acquiescence to His Father’s will and purpose. Jesus prayed, “Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done” (22:42).

Some Christians believe that it would never be God’s will that He allow His people to suffer hardship and deprivation. They think or maybe even say, “Surely it is not God’s will that I endure such things. Certainly it is His will that I escape that which I am suffering!” But do not be so certain of that. There are sufferings we are called upon not to escape from entering, but rather to endure once having entered them. Peter wrote, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). We, as our Lord, have a cross to bear and we are to yield our shoulder to it and not shrink from it. We are not called to escape suffering, but endure it. Now granted, there are occasions when it is fitting and good to flee. The disciples were to flee from Jerusalem. Paul would escape by means of being lowered down a wall in a basket. But there are some things, many things, from which we are not to attempt escape, but seek to endure and overcome. If we would follow the Saviour into His glory, we must follow in His footsteps of persevering endurance in trial.

Again we read from Luke’s pen these words, that though God may have us encounter suffering, He will enable His own to persevere upon our submission to Him. We read in Luke’s account that no sooner did the Lord Jesus say, “not mine, but yours be done”, that an angel was sent to strengthen Him. Verse 43 reads, “Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” God will strengthen His own people in their time of weakness. God’s grace is always sufficient for the one who submits to His will.

But this grace that God gives on these occasions may be given to endure even greater trials. Notice that the Lord received an answer to His prayer. Luke 22:43f, read, “And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. *And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly.*” The answer to our Lord’s prayer was not a cessation of His sufferings; rather, it was strength to endure more suffering; it was strength to pray more. Verse 44 came after the help given in verse 43; the angel came to Jesus to give Him strength so that He could continue to pray more. And take note: sometimes the Lord gives strength in prayer in order to enable you to pray even longer and more fervently. Some prayer (if not all prayer) takes the grace to pray and to persevere in prayer.

It was here and now that satan’s temptation to leave His work unfinished came upon Him fully. One once surmised the nature of the tempter’s attack. I will read his description of the possible spiritual battle that ensued:

“Son of God, “ the tempter said, “is it so? Are you really called to bear the sin of man? Has God said, ‘I have laid help upon one that is mighty,’ and are you He, the chosen of God, to bear all this load? Look at your weakness! You are even now sweating great drops of blood; surely you are not He whom the Father has ordained to be mighty to save; or if you be, what wilt you gain by it? What will it avail you? You have glory enough already. See what miscreants they are whom you are to offer up yourself a sacrifice. Your best friends are asleep about you when you most need their comfort; your treasurer, Judas, is hastening to betray you for the price of a common slave. The world for which you sacrifice yourself will cast out your name as evil, and your church, for which you do pay the ransom-price, what is it worth? A company of mortals. Your divinity could create the like in a moment it pleases you; why do you need, then, pour out your soul unto death?” Such arguments satan would use; the hellish craft of one who had been thousands of years tempting men, would know how to invent all manner of mischief. He would pour the hottest coals of hell upon the Saviour. It was in struggling with temptation, among others, that, being in an agony, our Saviour prayed more earnestly.⁵

God gives strength to do His will. His will is difficult, not easy. The will of God is perfect and good, but not easy. But the burden is lightened on our shoulders when Christ is perceived to have gone on before

⁵ Charles Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 9, p. 77.

us having born a much heavier load than what He has entrusted to us. But further, when we see that He, too, is shouldering our burdens beside us so as to enable us to bear up under the load, in short, when our burden is seen to be His burden, then we find “His yoke to be easy, and His burden to be light.”

But sadly, we see little has changed since that day. His disciples continue to neglect His warnings; to this day many of His disciples neglect prayer.

IV. Jesus upbraided His disciples for their prayerlessness (22:45-46)

In **verses 45 and 46** we read that Jesus returned to His disciples after having prayed to His Father.

⁴⁵When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.

⁴⁶Then He said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”

Here we read that Jesus found them sleeping, but that it was due to their “sorrow.” In Matthew 26:44 we read, “And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.” How many of us fail to heed the warnings to “watch and pray!” We find ourselves in deep trouble, deep anguish, and then we may accuse God in our thoughts for having mismanaged our lives. We would save ourselves a whole lot of grief if we would pray now, while our faith is strong, while our load is light, while our powers of concentration are keen, while our hearts are filled with devotion, rather than later when oppressed and depressed.

But for them, they waited too long. It was now too late to pray. The crowd was upon them, as we will consider next Lord’s Day, Lord willing. Jesus said, “See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, My betrayer is at hand” (Matt. 26:45f). They should have prayed. Soon, they all fled, and Jesus was left alone with His captors. But this was their hour, “when darkness reigned.”

From this point in time to the cross, which was only hours away, events would occur rapidly. He was arrested and taken to the house of the high priest, and then before the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews. From there He was before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, then to the Jewish King Herod, back to Pilate, and finally He is led to Calvary. But it was here on the Mount of Olives that Jesus had won the battle. We see Him in weakness, pleading to His Father. But no one else but His disciples witnessed Him in such a posture. When He was arrested and led forth from that place, He went forth resolute, in strength, courage, and resolve before crowds and kings. The temptation was over. Though His sufferings were only beginning, He had won His battle here on His knees. He went forth from the garden as a Conqueror, in royal dignity to face His accusers and His death. Praise God for such a Saviour!
