

The Gospel According to
Luke

“Blood, Sweat & Prayers”

Chapter 22:39-46

Introduction

“Sin City” used to be a synonym for Las Vegas. It might surprise you to learn that Vegas has dropped down to number three on the list of the world’s most sinful cities:

- Number five on the list is a place called Gatecrasher in England – a music festival described as ‘sweat, drugs, and alcohol.’
- Amsterdam, Holland, is in the number four position. You can smoke pot or hashish in its coffee shops. Prostitution has been legal there since the year 1815. One interesting fact: While prostitution is legal, and tourists are encouraged to tour the famous Red Light District, taking photographs in that section of town is strictly illegal.
- Las Vegas now occupies the number three position – although they are trying hard to regain their status as Sin City with their recent ad campaign that states, *Whatever happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.*
- New Orleans is the second most sinful city on the list. *It helps to have Mardi Gras!* By the way: Although many people think that Hurricane Katrina was God’s judgment upon sinful New Orleans, the fact is the most sinful parts of the city were spared from serious damage.
- The real Sin City, number one on the list, is Pattaya, Thailand. Government officials refer to their city as the ‘Sexual Disneyland’ of the world.

The list highlights the attraction of those places for people whose desires are illegitimate but legalized. Those who go to Pattaya seeking to sin are not entering into a city so much as they are entering into a place of temptation with plans to yield to it and indulge themselves.

If you are a Christian, there are many temptations in the world. Some are in Sin Cities; but some are right here in your own city. Some are in your home, office, or school. It would be nice if they were clearly marked with signs that said, *Now Entering Temptation* – so you could *recognize* and *resist* them.

Jesus spoke to His disciples about temptation almost as if it were a place on the map:

1. In verse thirty-nine He encouraged them to **not enter into temptation**, as if it were a place that could be recognized.
2. In verse forty-six Jesus exhorted them to resist **temptation** when they found themselves surrounded by it.

Jesus said you would *recognize* and *resist* temptation if you **pray**. Seems simple enough; and yet we see that His disciples slept when they ought to have prayed. It's a challenge to us to develop a little spiritual insomnia out in the world of temptation.

We'll try to stay awake by organizing our thoughts around two points: #1 Pray Ahead Of Time And You Will Recognize The Entrance Into Temptation, and #2 Pray At The Time And You Will Resist Entering Into Temptation.

#1 Pray Ahead Of Time
And You Will Recognize The Entrance Into Temptation
(v39-43)

Temptation is all around you. You cannot avoid it. Even if you could live in a place totally sheltered from the world and its influences, you'd find a strong source of temptation from within your own heart.

You cannot avoid being tempted. But you do not have to yield to it and thus enter into it. Jesus' initial encouragement is to recognize temptation.

Luke 22:39 Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.

This account in the Gospel of Luke is more condensed than the ones in Matthew and Mark. For example: Luke tells you only that Jesus was on the [Mount of Olives](#), and doesn't even mention that the particular spot was the Garden of Gethsemane. Luke was inspired to use these particular words. While it is good to get the whole picture, sometimes it's profitable to focus on the specific details provided in a particular passage.

It was Jesus' custom to go out to the Mount of Olives at the end of each day's ministry that final week in Jerusalem. He and His disciples camped-out there at night. It was like a mini-retreat, filled with praying to His Father in Heaven.

Overnight, or weekend, or week-long retreats can be spiritually uplifting. *But so can mini-retreats!* You can have them everyday if you like – several times each day.

[Luke 22:40](#) When He came to the place, He said to them, “[Pray that you may not enter into temptation.](#)”

Before Jesus agonized in prayer, He was thinking of His disciples. Even in His hour of great need, He came to serve, not to be served.

Jesus gave them an *assessment* and an *assignment*:

1. The assessment was that they were surrounded by [temptation](#).
2. The assignment was to [pray that \[they\] may not enter into temptation](#).

Neither the assessment nor the assignment has changed. Temptation is all around you, in the world. It is from within you, from what the Bible calls your flesh. Add to the world and your flesh the reality that there is a devil whose spiritual forces are against you and it all seems overwhelming.

Jesus confidently tells you that you can recognize temptation if you will [pray](#). He didn't seem to have in mind any special kind of praying; He was simply encouraging you to get into the habit of regularly conversing with your Father in Heaven.

Jesus knew exactly what was coming that night and the following day. He would be betrayed, arrested, tried, beaten, and crucified. All His disciples would be severely tempted; one, at least, would deny Him three times. They should pray ahead of time so that they would recognize the temptations and not enter into them.

Jesus knows **your** afternoon, **your** evening, and all of **your** tomorrows. He's telling you, right now, to pray – to regularly converse with your Father in Heaven – so that you will be spiritually prepared to recognize the temptations you will be in and be able to resist them. You can wait to pray after you're assaulted by temptation; but it's always better to be prepared ahead of time. You might call it, *Pre-prayer*.

We are privileged to see Jesus in one of the most intimate spiritual moments of His life.

Luke 22:41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed,

I'm told that the most common posture for prayer at that time was not to kneel, but to stand, looking up towards Heaven. Jesus' kneeling posture reveals the weight of the burden upon Him.

By the way: If you have trouble staying awake during prayer, **stand up!**

Luke 22:42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

The **cup** is a pictorial reference to God's wrath against, and judgment upon, sin. It's like a cup that keeps filling until it needs to one day be poured-out. Jesus asked His Father to **take this cup away**. He was about to take upon Himself all of our sins – the sins of the whole human race. The Bible, in one place, says that Jesus was made sin for us (2Corinthians 5:21). He would be our substitute, and our sacrifice, to satisfy the wrath and judgment of God. There is a depth of suffering by our precious Lord that we cannot ever begin to comprehend – but it is revealed in His very real desire to avoid it, **if there were any other way you and I might be saved.**

Jesus was God; but in His mission as Savior of the world, He modeled submission to His Father. As a man, He might **will** that the **cup** be taken **away** – but only in the context of the greater good His Father would accomplish through His suffering.

Prayer is discovering God's will – not demanding my own.

Luke 22:43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.

Luke is the only writer who mentions the **angel**. If you need to be 'touched by an angel,' one will be revealed to you. They are all around you anyway. Truth is, *most of our suffering doesn't require such a lofty revelation*. The visible presence of the angel is to remind us that you can have the invisible resources of Heaven as you pray. God dispatches grace and mercy to our hearts from His throne in Heaven.

Luke 22:44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

This is the only use of the word **agony** in the Gospels. His praying in the Garden may hold lessons for us, but it was unique to Jesus.

Earlier I described Him as being made sin for us. The Bible sometimes explains it by using an illustration from the world of banking. Think of yourself as having a spiritual bank account. In it are all your sins – past, present, and future. Jesus also has a spiritual account. In it is His perfect righteousness. When you realize you are a sinner in need of saving, and you receive Jesus as your Savior from sin, His perfect righteousness is immediately transferred into your account. Your sin is transferred out of your account and put into His account. The word the Bible uses to describe this transaction is *imputed*. Jesus agonized as the sins of the whole world were imputed to Him so He could offer whosoever will believe on Him His perfect righteousness.

Scholars debate whether or not Jesus literally **sweat... great drops of blood**, because Luke (who was a physician) used the word **like** to describe Jesus' sweating. There is a medical condition (that I cannot pronounce) in which physical stress causes tiny blood vessels to

rupture and blood to be excreted as you sweat. It's likely Jesus did sweat blood.

There is an interesting comparison in His sweating. When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, one of the things God told him was that **in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread** (Genesis 3:19). We associate sweating with work and exertion. All that Adam's work and exertion could produce was sweat.

Now, in another garden, Jesus was sweating His blood to overcome Adam's sin and to reverse the curse it had brought upon mankind and God's creation. Jesus sweating is a picture of Him as the Second Adam, representing the entire human race. He sweat as Adam did; **but it also included His blood** – the one commodity in all of the universe sufficient to save us.

The very best we can do – our very best works – are only sweat. We need the work of Jesus and His blood to be saved.

Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is unique. It is the agony of God in human flesh. It is the way a person who is fully God and fully human prays as He is facing death on the Cross to be made sin for the human race. Jesus bowed low under the burden; He bled as it pressed upon Him. It's no coincidence that He was on the Mount of Olives – which would have been dotted with presses that were used to extract the oil from the olives.

During His unique agony, the Lord thought of His disciples – including you and I. He told us to pray ahead of time so that we would recognize the temptations all around us, and within us, and not enter into them.

How did His disciples respond? *They slept!* Jesus was gracious, and told them,

#2 Pray At The Time
And You Will Resist Entering Into Temptation
(v45-46)

The disciples were not ready for temptation; but the Lord still encouraged them to pray. If you are not pre-prayered for temptation, and you don't recognize it, *you can still pray and resist it.*

Luke 22:45 When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.

Matthew and Mark record that Jesus left eight of His disciples in one part of the Garden of Gethsemane while Peter, James and John went further with Him. They describe Jesus praying three separate times, each time returning to find these guys sleeping. Only Luke mentioned that they were *sleeping from sorrow*. It's not to excuse them, but it is a tender insight.

Jesus had described His death. Then He had told them one among them would betray Him. Jesus had specifically told Peter that he would deny his Lord three times. They reacted with understandable *sorrow*, leading to physical exhaustion.

Listen: Some of the things Jesus tells you throughout your life will bring **you** sorrow. Your loved ones will die; you will get sick – sometimes incurably. I don't need to go on listing all the terrible things that can and will come upon us as we live in this fallen world, in our bodies of rotting flesh.

You react with understandable sorrow, leading to physical exhaustion. Then what? You can be *overwhelmed*, or you can *overcome*.

Sleeping is a picture of being overwhelmed. You close your eyes to what's happening and fall into yourself – with nothing but your own thoughts and dreams to distract you for a short while.

Instead – **Stand up and overcome!**

Luke 22:46 Then He said to them, *“Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”*

In the very next verses, the multitude would come and arrest Jesus – scattering His followers. The disciples had wasted their opportunity

to prepare for the temptation. It was now upon them. Still the Lord told them prayer would allow them to resist temptation.

Isn't God gracious? Even after they'd blown it, He was seeking to encourage them.

We'll read in subsequent weeks that they did not do well during this temptation. Peter will draw one of their swords and attempt to fight their way out. He was eager to fight with a sword, but not prepared to fight with spiritual weapons. Prayer would have given him the insight he needed to resist the temptation using the spiritual resources available to him.

It's not unusual to find yourself being overwhelmed by something that God has allowed. For a while, you are blowing it – looking for any way out, using every physical resource at your disposal. The Lord patiently tells you to pray. You go on instead, seeking some sword by which you can fight your way out. The Lord goes on patiently telling you to pray. When you finally stop looking to your own strength, He provides the spiritual resources you need to either end or to endure your trial.

Applying the Word:

If you are a Christian... The obvious application is to pause and take inventory of your spiritual habits. Are you praying ahead of time? Do you pray at the time?

There are two levels on which to answer – one *personal*, one *public*.

1. Only you can perform your own personal inventory of your prayer habits. **All of us will come to the conclusion that we can pray more!**
2. Public prayer, by its very nature, is something more quantifiable. We can easily see if we are praying *more* or *less* as a fellowship. Let me give you some raw data, without any analysis. In 2004 about a dozen people attended our 24-hours of prayer during the peak hours of 7-9pm on Friday. In 2005, during those same hours, only the host – *one person* – was in attendance. It may be an anomaly; **or we might be asleep.**

There are always folks here who are not yet believers in Jesus Christ. The blood He sweat, and would later shed on the Cross as He was crucified... *It was for you.* Your own good works, or religion, or philosophy, will leave you bankrupt when it comes time to pay the wages of sin. You need the righteousness of Jesus to be put into your account. It happens the moment you believe in Him by faith.