



Protection from Temptation

Chapter 9

Lesson 9

The authors state that Jesus' closeness to the Father in prayer was the key to keeping Him from temptation.

1. The writer of Hebrews encourages us along the same lines. Read Hebrews 4:14-16, and record your initial thoughts concerning this passage. How is God challenging you in your prayer life? Do you "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace" in your time of need? Why or why not?

Christ refused to sleep in the face of the temptation to avoid the cross, but instead in the midst of suffering He learned obedience through reverential and prayerful submission. During His great trial He asked for His disciples to join Him in continual prayer. Here's a summary of what He had told His disciples during this critical time, "Keep watching all the events around you and realize that you will enter into a variety of temptations in the days ahead. You will be like sheep that have been scattered because the shepherd has been struck down. The key to your faithfulness in remaining my disciples and my faithful witnesses is prayer to our loving heavenly Father, who will provide the power to overcome the flesh."

In Matthew's account of this critical time Jesus went away and prayed three times, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." In between these agonizing prayers He returned to find the disciples fast asleep! After the third prayer He repeated, "Are you still sleeping and resting?" and then informed them, "Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!"

Our Lord began his earthly ministry praying and fasting for forty days, only to be tempted by Satan to abandon the Father's plan. He closed his earthly ministry with an hour of agonizing prayer in which he struggled with the temptation to avoid the cross. If our Lord Jesus Christ himself, the Son of God in His humanity, prayed when He was faced with temptation, you can see why He exhorted His disciples, "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Paul would later write to the Christians in Corinth, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted

beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." (1 Corinthians 10:13). He doesn't mean that you will be able to get away from every temptation, but that God will give you the ability to endure temptation while you're in it. From Jesus' life we learn that this is largely accomplished through prayer. These are difficult and stressful days for many of us, and the weakness of our flesh coupled with the pressure of our culture to deny and forsake the Lord is mounting all the time. There is a great need for each and every one of us to pray to God not just for ourselves but also for each other that we will not enter into that temptation.

2. Reflect on Matthew 26:36-46. Can you picture yourself with Jesus and falling asleep out of grief and confusion? Sometimes the pillow is an easy escape! When you consider the struggles with temptation and sin in your own life, what role are you allowing prayer to play in the battle?

Read chapter nine in *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus*, and then consider the following question.

3. What are the most important things you have learned from the example of Jesus in overcoming temptation?

4. In your life, what are the factors and circumstances that tend to make temptations harder to resist? How can prayer overcome this?

5. For overcoming temptation, in what practical ways can you depend more fully on the resources of God?

Beyond the Book:

Read Ephesians 6:10-20. In light of verses 16 and 18, how does Paul contribute to our understanding of the significance of prayer in light of our spiritual battles?