

***“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”*** Mark 14:38

These words were spoken by Jesus to His disciples just before His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had already told them that they would be made to stumble because of Him that night (Zech. 13:7). Now He warns them of the problem -- the **spirit** is willing, but the **flesh** is weak. Exactly what does that mean?

The **“flesh”** here does not just mean man’s physical composition. It wasn’t the body that was seeking to run from danger and preserve itself; it was the *human mind* filled with natural, carnal desire. The disciples were not prepared for the events that were about to transpire. They were about to deny Jesus and run for their lives! Thus, the *human spirit* tends to love God and His will *theoretically*, but *practically* one’s fleshly desires tend to overrule us. Self-preservation is a strong impulse in man. It takes great spiritual effort to overcome it.

### THE LESSON FOR US?

The lesson for us is the same. Paul speaks of the carnal, unregenerate man in Romans 7:22-23 and says, *“For I delight in the law of God according to the **inward man**. But I see another law in my members, warring against **the law of my mind**, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”* But these were the Lord’s disciples! Yet they would succumb to the temptation of denying Jesus in order to save their own skin! Their transformation as spiritual men was not yet complete. They were falling back to the old man of sin. In the words of Paul to the Corinthians, *“for you are still carnal”* (1 Cor. 3:3). The inward man delights in God, but it still requires strenuous effort to master one’s earthly self.

We must *“gird up the loins of (our) mind, be sober ...”* (1 Pet. 1:13). Or in modern words, we must be *mentally tough, mentally prepared*. Be aware of the circumstances and surroundings we are in, estimate the dangers which surround us, and get mentally prepared!

Jesus told His disciples how to do this: *“Watch and pray.”* That was exactly what Jesus did to overcome His greatest hour of temptation. Notice Mark 14, beginning at verse 32. Jesus comes with His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane and tells them to *“Sit here while I pray.”* **Why was Jesus praying?** The Scriptures say that *“He began to be troubled and deeply distressed”* (v. 33). He told His disciples *“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death...”* (v. 34). Jesus began to be *“troubled”* or *“sore amazed”* (KJV). The Greek word means to be *“utterly astonished.”* Jesus **knew** that He had to die for the sins of the world; He **knew** that He had to die the horrible death of the cross. But now the time had arrived. The horror of the cross is overtaking Him. It is a horrific thing which stands right before His eyes. He desperately wants to avoid this cup of suffering, and He prays that His loving Father will somehow remove it, if possible.

Furthermore, Jesus began to be *“deeply distressed”* or *“very heavy”* (KJV). This Greek word means to be *“full of loathing”* or in *“deep mental distress.”* He overcame the temptation to escape this horrible death by **praying** to His heavenly Father, *repeatedly*. He *always* concluded those prayers by saying *“not My will, but Thy will be done”!* Mentally, Jesus resigned Himself to the inevitable fate of crucifixion. He *learned obedience* through suffering (Heb. 5:7-9). But that learning experience was not without *“vehement cries and tears”!* Do we understand this?! Jesus’ soul was *“exceedingly sorrowful”* (v. 34). His sorrow was overwhelming Him; a baptism of grief. But He endured all of this for us by **watching** and **praying**.

We overcome our temptations and fleshly weaknesses in the same manner. It’s not an easy task, but with God’s help (1 Cor. 10:13), it is possible. But do we **fight** temptation like this, or do we just *give in* and say it’s **impossible** to avoid? Jesus gave us an example to follow, and admonished His disciples to practice it. Heaven is worth the sacrificial suffering. You and I can look to Jesus, the Author of our salvation, and do what He did. With God’s Word guiding us, and with Jesus’ example firmly in mind, we can win the battle.