

As follows in Jesus' name:

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Today, we consider Jesus' passion in the Garden of Gethsemane.

If we summarized His main message to His disciples that night, after the Passover, it is this, **"Watch!"**

Literally, the Greek word could be translated simply as, "stay awake."

And we see that this was certainly something that the disciples had difficulty with that night.

Three times Jesus returns to Peter, James, and John sleeping while He earnestly prayed.

Their eyes were heavy with sleep, it was late into the night,

and Jesus wasn't just going over to pray for 5 minutes.

But Jesus was not only concerned that they would be asleep while He is awake.

He used the word more in the sense of "keeping watch, being alert, being vigilant"

just as a sentinel of a military camp is to keep watch at night.

So what was Jesus wanting them to "keep watch" for?

Was He concerned that Judas and his mob might come upon them in some kind of a surprise attack?

No. Jesus was not concerned about this. He Himself knew what would happen;

He even knew when it would happen, as He wakes Peter, James, and John up the 3rd time to go meet the soldiers coming to arrest Him.

No, it wasn't as a guard against the soldiers.

They were to stay awake and keep watch as sentinels of their own hearts and for their Savior.

He told them, **"Watch and pray!"** (In other words:

"Be aware of the evil that is around you and pray for the Lord's mercy and His gracious protection."

...

You and I, we have the benefit of hindsight.

To a certain extent, we know the evil that befell Jesus, and I am sure that

had the disciples had that same hind sight, they would have prepared differently for it.

But it is not as if God had not foretold it. It is not as if Jesus had not warned them.

He had, **"You will all fall away, for it is written,**

'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'"

Jesus not only quoted the prophesy from Zechariah 13:6, but also explicitly told them what it meant.

It was at this point that the weakness of Simon Peter's flesh started to show itself.

He refused to believe that HE could ever fall away from Jesus, even if he had to die with Him.

In this response, we see where Peter's trust really was at this point.

It wasn't in Jesus. It wasn't even in God's word.

It was in his own strength... in his own will... in his own perception of the strength of his faith.

As Jesus warned him a little later on, **the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

St. Mark reports the incident of the servant having his ear cut off by a disciple,

by “one of those who stood by” who “drew his sword and struck the servant,” but he doesn’t report who that “one” was... St. John does; he tells us that it was Peter. So we see that Peter was still bold, even when surrounded by soldiers with clubs and swords, even when there were only 2 swords among the disciples.

But when Jesus rebukes him and tells him to put his sword away, and then heals the servant’s ear and allows Himself to be arrested, then Peter’s strength and confidence is lost, as well as that of all the disciples. They not only flee from the soldiers, but they **fall away** from Jesus, just as He foretold.

But really, even while they were with Him, as He was walking with them to the garden, even at that point, they were not watching. Rather than listening to Jesus, not only speak of their fall, but also of His death and resurrection, they were trying to speak over Him. Rather than being vigilant and alert to the truth being spoken to them by the Son of God, about the weakness of their sinful nature and how Christ would overcome it, they were trying to flex their fleshly muscles and impress Him by their feeble attempts at devotion.

How much more guilt could they have spared their consciences, if they had only listened, and watched and prayed as Jesus had instructed. Certainly they would have fallen away, as the Lord had spoken, but how much more quickly could they have looked forward to His resurrection from the dead. Instead of living in fear and uncertainty, they could have lived in faith and confidence.

But they were completely unprepared. They were not alert to the Word of God, to the Scriptures. They had not kept watch of themselves... against temptations to their frail mortal flesh, against the pride and arrogance of their own sinful nature. They had not been vigilant in prayer, against the schemes, the assaults, and attacks of the evil one, and against the evil of those under the devil’s tyranny. But that is all hindsight.

...

But Jesus’ warning wasn’t written just to tell us about their sin and weakness. It was written also so that He may warn us to **watch and pray**. It wasn’t only in the Garden of Gethsemane that the devil works, that evil men do horrible things, that temptations lurk, and that human flesh is sleepy, frail, and weak. What we see of the weakness of human flesh in that garden is true of us every day. You are always susceptible to temptation, to pride and arrogance... to fall away from Christ. And how often do we do exactly like the disciples, trying to speak over Jesus and say, **“Even though they all fall away, I will not.”** or, even more boldly, **“If I must die with You, I will not deny You,”** rather than say a prayer, **“Lord, have mercy on me... Lord, help me.”** Matthew 15:22ff Or perhaps, instead of being watchful, we have become sleepy and lethargic. You have not given much thought to our Lord’s words of the terrible/evil days ahead, how He tells us, **“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.**

And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.

And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. Matthew 24:9-11

We Christians have lived a relatively comfortable life in this our country so far.

But are we listening to our Lord's warnings?

Are we watching and praying, preparing ourselves for the trials and temptations ahead?

Dear Fellow Redeemed, Watch! Watch and know thyself!

You are but dust and ashes, Genesis 18:27 **withering grass and a fading flower.** Isaiah 40:7-8

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

But don't watch only yourself, watch and listen to the one who knows better than you your frailty.

Watch the Savior prepare His disciples, not only for their fall, but also for their resurrection.

Watch Him who, in love, corrects and encourages His disciples.

Watch Him who knows the weakness of the flesh that He Himself has taken on
and spends His last night in watchfulness and intense prayer.

Watch Him as He gives Himself up to the Father's will, though it means suffering and death for Him.

Watch Him lovingly heal the ear of His enemy's servant.

Watch Him who knows perfectly well what the Scriptures say and so knows what will happen to Him
go forward without fear, trusting His Father's promises that though He die,
yet He shall rise on the 3rd day.

Watch... and pray. Pray for the Holy Spirit's gift of faith to be strengthened in You.

As you read, hear, mark, learn and inwardly digest His holy word, the word of God's Son,
pray that you may grow in grace and knowledge of your Savior.

When you wake up from your sleep and prepare for the day,

pray for the Lord's gracious protection, that He would guard and keep you from all evil.

When temptations beset you and you fall,

pray for forgiveness, confident that Jesus, who has redeemed the world through His own blood,
has also spent His precious blood to redeem you.

Pray for His peace, trusting the Lord's Word that your sins are forgiven for Jesus's sake.

And pray for a clean heart, that the Lord would renew the joy of His salvation

and that your willing spirit would overcome the weaknesses of your flesh,

that having been raised by our Lord in Baptism, you may walk in newness of life,
prepared for whatever trials and temptations that are before you.

Let us pray: Preserve us, O Lord, while waking and guard us while sleeping, that awake we may watch
with Christ and asleep, we may rest in peace. **Amen.**

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria