

Prayer: A Sin Preventer

Prayer is a *sin-killer*. No one can sin and pray, for prayer will either make us cease from sin, or sin will make us cease from prayer. (F. E. Marsh, *The Spiritual Life or Helps and Hindrances*, p. 13)

Prayer has the power to hold us up in our goings and give us victory over temptation. (R. A. Torrey, *How to Obtain Fullness of Power*, p. 75)

Be honest with one another about your sins, and pray for each other that you might get the victory over them, for the petition of a truly good man is powerfully effective. (James 5:16; The Cotton Patch Bible by Clarence Jordan)

I. There are a number of commands that God gives us that would keep us from falling into temptation and sin.

1. We are told to resist the devil and He will flee from us (James 4:7), give the devil no place (Eph. 4:27), to put off the old man and put on the new (Eph. 4:22-24), renew our minds (Rom. 12:1-3), cleans ourselves using God's promises (2 Cor. 7:1), and flee youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22).
2. Regardless of these commands, we will find them difficult to obey apart from prayer and receiving God's enablement.
3. It is not that God commands the impossible, because He does not. However, we know that our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41)
4. *BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: **O let me not wander from thy commandments.** Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* (Psalm 119:9-11)
5. The above is a prayer of David. He not only did what was practical (Cleansing his ways with the Word of God and hiding the Word in His heart), he also relied on God by asking God to keep him from wandering.

II. Jesus Model Prayer to prevent falling into Temptation

1. Matt. 6:13
2. In this model prayer we are not asking the Lord to keep us from ever being tempted, but to keep us from *falling into* temptation.
3. Adam Clarke wrote, "Taking the word in its *common acceptance*, and that *lead us not* is to be understood, *do not permit us*, to be overthrown by any devices of our adversaries, whether *men or devils*; we are to observe, that the prayer is not *do not permit us to be tempted*. This God will not answer to any man, for *temptation* is a part of our *Christian warfare*;"
4. God never leads us into *defeat* but into *victory*. So we can understand Jesus' instructive prayer as not asking God to not do something He would never do anyway, but to preserve and deliver us when we come under satanic assault.

II.I The ability of God to keep us:

1. God is able to keep us from stumbling and falling (Jude 1:24) and He is able to make a way of

- escape from every temptation (1 Cor. 10:13)'
2. God's ability to help us is appropriated and secured through prayer.
 3. *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, **he is able to succour them that are tempted.*** (Heb. 2:17, 18)
 4. Jesus is our High Priest. We cannot go to God except through Him. It is by His shed blood that we are able to go to the Father and receive the help that we need to overcome temptation.
 5. *For because He Himself [in His humanity] has suffered in being tempted (tested and tried), **He is able [immediately] to run to the cry of (assist, relieve) those who are being tempted and tested and tried [and who therefore are being exposed to suffering].*** (Heb. 2:18; Amplified Bible)
 6. We look first at Jesus. And what is it that constitutes Him such a perfect High Priest? You know how the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us of that. It consists in this: that He is God and that He is man. As God, He is the omnipotent Creator—not only holy and righteous and able to conquer sin outside of us, but as Creator-God He has access to our inmost being. So that He can indeed cleanse us and lift these hearts of ours into fellowship with God. (Andrew Murray, *Jesus Christ-Prophet Priest*, pp. 21, 22)
 7. We are invited to come to the throne of grace boldly to receive the help we need to overcome temptation:
 8. *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.* (Heb. 4:15, 16)

IV God's Presence keeps us from sin:

1. If God is the One who is able to keep us from stumbling and falling then it only makes sense to maintain communion with Him.
2. True prayer gives us a sense of the Lord's presence. No sane person will willingly sin when they have a tangible sense of the Lord's nearness (Psalm 145:18)
3. Praying in the Spirit (praying in tongues) edifies and builds us up (Jude 20; 1 Cor. 14:4). If one is built up spiritually then such a person is slow to commit sin.

V. Submission to God – Resist Sin and Satan

1. *Or, do you think that the scripture says in an empty manner and to no purpose, The Spirit [Holy Spirit] who has been caused to make His permanent home in us has a passionate desire [to control us] to the point of envy [of any control indwelling sin may have over us]? Moreover, He [the Holy Spirit] gives greater grace. For this reason [in conformity with this] He [the Holy Spirit] says, God sets himself in battle array against the arrogant and haughty but gives grace to the humble and lowly. Be subject with implicit obedience to God at once and once for all. Stand immovable against the onset of the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse [your] hands, O sinners, and purify [your] hearts, O double-minded (**James 4:5-8**; Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation of the New Testament).*
2. T. Austin Sparks wrote: "... prayer is submission, and here we must be aware of the possibility of a contradiction in terms. Prayer is submission. Passive inaction in what is called trust is not prayer. We have heard people speak of trust, which for them means just passivity and inaction, but it is not prayer. Submission is always active, not passive. Submission means getting into

line with the divine mind.” (from his book, “In Touch With The Throne”)

3. Sparks also wrote, “Submission is not merely the suppression of desire, but the bringing of desire into line with the divine will, and, if needs be, changing desire.... In prayer, where submission is in view, that is very often what has to be done. That strength of desire has to be arrested in one direction and brought into another direction, perhaps from propelling us forward to bringing us to a standstill in the will of God.”

V. Failure to pray can cause us to fall into temptation and sin:

1. Luke 22:31-34; **Matt. 26:31, 32**
2. **Matt. 26:40, 41** (see also Luke 22:40, 46) – Notice that Jesus is speaking directly to Peter here. Even though Jesus gave Peter the prophecy concerning his yielding to temptation, Peter could have avoided it if he prayed. Hezekiah was able to avert a prophecy by praying (Isa. 38:1-6; Jer. 26:18, 19)
3. **Mat. 26:69-75** – Peter falls into temptation. Based on the fact that prayer has “changed God’s mind” about a prophecy in the past, and the fact Jesus personally urged Peter to pray so that he would not fall into temptation, Peter’s fall was not the result of prophecy but was the result of his failure to pray. Prophecy is not to be fatalism. Our prophesied destinies can be changed through prayer or lack of it.
4. There is no doubt that Jesus’ prayer for Peter is what led to his restoration (Luke 22:31, 32). Jesus’ example concerning Peter teaches us that our prayers for those who may be facing a trial or temptation makes a difference in the outcome.