

Overcoming Temptation - 'Watch and Pray'

by Erlo Stegen

To overcome temptation, we must be watchful and prayerful, seeking God's guidance and strength to avoid being led astray.

Scripture: Job 1:8, Matthew 26:41, Luke 22:32, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Ephesians 6:11, Hebrews 12:1, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 2:7, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Overcoming Temptation", "Vigilance in Faith"

Description

Erlo Stegen emphasizes the critical importance of both watching and praying to overcome temptation, as highlighted in Matthew 26:41. He warns that neglecting to watch can lead to spiritual downfall, using the example of Peter and the relentless nature of Satan, who seeks to devour believers. Stegen illustrates that temptation can come in various forms and that even the most righteous, like Job, are not exempt from trials. He encourages believers to remain vigilant and discerning, as true faith requires active engagement with God's Word and prayer. Ultimately, he calls for repentance and faithfulness, assuring that God can use those who heed His warnings to bless others.

Transcript

Text: Matt 26: 41: "Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation..."

In the Christian world these words are switched around and the emphasis is on prayer and the first word "watch" is sadly neglected. From the beginning of this revival these are the words that stay constantly with me - "watch and pray". If one does not watch one can find oneself off the track at the end of the day.

Jesus said these words to Peter and that "satan wants to sift you like grain" but I have prayed for you that after you have repented you would be enabled to strengthen your brethren.

Satan is not asleep - he is busy all the time. In Peter's letter it says that we are to be on our guard, to watch, because our enemy, the devil, goes around like a roaring lion. Just picture this literally: if you knew that there was a devouring lion in your home would you act casually or would you be extremely watchful?

When Jesus spoke the parable of the Sower and the Seed (the Word of God), there were four types of soil: some stony, some shallow, some weedy and the fourth was fertile and productive. If we had to literally extrapolate from this then it would imply that only one in four who receive the Word are successful with the seed sown in their hearts. Remember, some Christians listen to a sermon in church but, no

sooner have they gone, than the "birds of the air" have eaten the seed, and that person has completely forgotten what he has heard.

Do you make the time to read the Bible and pray every day? If not, you'll find yourself swallowed by the world.

Take note that satan and his demons are not ignorant. He was in heaven and he fell with a "third of the stars" (other angels) who became demonic spirits. They have knowledge and they know how to tempt. The devil can even tempt you with the Bible by abusing verses from it to take you off track.

There is a lady here in our midst who shared her testimony with me recently about how God saved her from 10 years of hard whiskey drinking. It's amazing that she survived. She now works at Doctors for Life and is a blessing. Just as Jesus said he would pray for Peter that after he repents he would be a blessing to others. But not all are tempted as she was. With her it was whiskey; with another the temptation could be wine - both are "w". The devil is full of wiles and is a master of variety.

Think of Job. He was righteous in the sight of God, yet the devil tempted him to such an extent that even his closest friends believed that he must have done something wrong to offend God to cause such calamities. The devil used a whole range of varieties in tempting righteous Job.

Some assume that being filled with the Holy Spirit will automatically make them great preachers and workers of miracles. When Jesus was filled with the Spirit He was immediately led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. This goes to show how watchful we have to be. The devil used Scripture to try and tempt our Lord.

It is not enough to say: "I go to church and have given my heart to the Lord". It is essential that you "watch and pray".

In the early days of revival a certain lady told me that the Lord had revealed to her, in prayer, that we should give her our Dodge (a big American car which we had at that time and could be filled with petrol (gasoline) with just R7.00 - now it would cost a hundred times more) and that if I was obedient to this revelation of hers then the Lord would supply us with a much bigger and better car. I told her that I would also pray and until today the Lord has never given me that same revelation. (in previous accounts of this story Erlo Stegen related how he eventually told the woman that she can pray again that the Lord would give her the bigger and better car and we'd stick with our old Dodge.)

We need to watch and pray to have discernment. Many Christians live under the false assumption that if the Holy Spirit works He will work in a sensationally big way. When the revival began in Maphumulo it was in an old cow shed. It was made of iron and wood. There were heaps of dung inside it so and I asked the local prison warder to assist us with some prisoners to help clear out the dung and fill in the rat and snake holes and whitewash the walls. It was there where we cried to the Lord for revival, repented and experienced the coming down of the Holy Spirit. God starts in small ways, in undignified places, to accomplish His purposes. Don't think that God looks for palaces to fill with the Spirit. He looks for that which is considered "nothing" to make "something".

When the revival broke out I remember on that second day, standing at the door, shaking hands with Emmanuel Khwela (still a co-worker today) and he said he had seen a board on the wall of that ex-cowshed/church, saying: "test, prove". But there was no board and I told him it must have been a

vision. When I opened my Bible it opened at 2Cor 13: 5 where (in my Amplified Bible at that time) it said that you "test and prove all things". These were the same English words for the Zulu words which Emmanuel had seen on that board. I realised that God was emphasizing to us that we must be vigilant, discerning and to always test and prove whether we are in the faith; that we have the real thing, not a fake or an imitation.

Jesus said that in the latter days many will fall away. If one thinks of the fact that just a few years after Jesus had ascended back into heaven He wrote letters to His 7 churches and 10 times He found fault with them. It breaks one's heart to think that most of those churches had allowed deception (through not being watchful and prayerful) into their midst. One church had even allowed the Nicolaitans to propagate their heresies and wickedness. They had allowed the devil into their midst ("the devil's throne" is how He put it). How gracious of our Lord that He intercedes for us. He wrote these letters to them (go and read Rev 1 to 3 on your knees and ask God to speak to you as you read what Jesus said to His church) because He was interceding for them and wanted them to repent and be restored and become watchful again.

When Jesus speaks to you, be faithful and repent and He will use you to help others.

To those churches in Revelations Jesus constantly said: "He who has an ear to hear, let Him hear what the Spirit is saying." He says that to you as well.

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