

Grace to you and peace ... from Jesus Christ, ... who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

<sup>45</sup> *When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow.* <sup>46</sup> *Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."*

Text: Luke 22:45-46 A 3-27-22 Passion History, part 4 Psalm 6 Responsive Psalm: 13  
Hymns: 38, 144 (1-2, 4-5), 446 (1-2, 4-6), 457

### TEARS OF SORROW

The Lord my God be praised, My Hope, my Life from heaven,  
The Spirit, whom the Son In love to me hath given.  
'Tis He revives my heart, 'Tis He that gives me pow'r,  
Help, comfort, and support In sorrow's gloomy hour. (TLH #38:3)

Dear fellow believers in Christ, crucified for us,

Our last two Lenten meditations focused on our Savior's sorrow – His sorrow over the death of Lazarus, and His sorrow over Jerusalem. Today's devotion focuses on the sorrow of Jesus' disciples over His approaching suffering and death

Jesus and His disciples had just celebrated the Passover together, at which time He said, "*I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*" (Lk. 22:15, my emphasis). Jesus also told them, "*the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table*" (Lk. 22:21). Jesus had told Peter in the presence of the others, "*Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat*" (Lk. 22:31). The disciples knew that one of them was going to betray Jesus. They knew that Jesus was going to suffer and, as He had told them more than once before, be killed. They knew that Satan was going to cause something bad to happen with Peter. All this was extremely stressful for the disciples.

Jesus and the disciples (now without Judas) had come to the Garden Of Gethsemane. In Matthew's account Jesus tells Peter, James, and John, "*My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me*" (Mt. 26:38). Seeing their beloved Lord like this and hearing His words made the three disciples even more stressed.

Jesus then went a little way off by Himself and prayed to His Father about His upcoming suffering and death. "*When He rose up from prayer, ... He found [the disciples] sleeping from sorrow.*" In their accounts Matthew and Mark just say, "*their eyes were heavy.*" John informs us that "*it was night*" (Jn. 13:30). The disciples were exhausted, their hearts were heavy, and they had fallen asleep.

We know the phrase, "Cry yourself to sleep." Our hearts can be weighed down with grief when we or a loved one are going through an especially difficult time in our life, or facing death. Grief

can keep us up at night. Grief can wear us down emotionally, mentally, and physically to the point that we fall asleep.

Jesus' time had come to sacrifice His life on the cross. He knew full well the horrible physical pain He was about to go through, and that He was going to die. But especially, Jesus knew the pain in His soul He would endure bearing our sins and our guilt, bearing His Father's anger and punishment that we deserved, facing Satan's fury, and suffering the torments of hell. (We know Jesus suffered the torments of hell because He suffered everything we deserve.) Jesus agonized over all this in prayer to His Father to the point that *"His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Lk. 22:44).

Jesus was always helping and serving others. He had said, *"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Mt. 20:28). Now Jesus had asked His disciples for something. Jesus had told them of His great sorrow. He had asked them, *"Watch with Me"* (Mt. 26:38). Jesus wanted His disciples to pray to His Father, asking Him to strengthen Jesus, and help Him to accept His Father's will for our salvation and fulfill it. But instead, the disciples fell asleep.

In Matthew's account Jesus tells His disciples, *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation"* (Mt. 26:41a). The disciples needed to be ready through prayer for the temptation to come. Jesus was being tempted to refuse to accept His Father's will that He suffer and die to save us. When Jesus died, His disciples would be tempted to doubt Him and fall away from Him for fear of suffering as His followers.

Instead of *"[watching and praying]"* to prepare for their coming temptation, the disciples sleep. They sleep because they're full of sorrow. Sleeping from sorrow isn't necessarily sinful. But turning to sleep or anything else instead of turning to God and praying is sinful.

In His great sorrow and weariness Jesus turned to His Father in prayer, and received the strength He needed to carry out His Father's will to save us. The writer to the Hebrews says, *"[Jesus], in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"* – Hebrews 5:7-9.

When we're sad and weary, we, too, need to turn to God in prayer. Jesus invites us, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Mt. 11:28). *"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me"* (Ps. 50:15).

Do we ever let grief and weariness keep us from praying? Do we dwell on our troubles and how bad we have it and how hard and unfair our lot in life is, instead of humbly coming to God in prayer and asking Him to help us know His will for us, and do it? Do we only pray for things surface deep instead of asking God to show us the root causes of our weariness and sorrow? Do we just want to blame our sorrow on someone else who did something to us, or on something that happened to us? Or are we willing, with God's help, to see if the real root of our sorrow is

our attitude and the way we are dealing, or not dealing, with things? The psalmist teaches us to pray, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any [hurtful] way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Ps. 139:23-24).

We need to *“watch and pray”* (from the original, *“keep on praying”*), asking God, “Are there temptations in this situation I need to see and avoid?” “What are You trying to teach me?” “What passages from Your Word apply to this situation?” “How should I deal with this in a way that is pleasing to You, and glorifies You before others?”

Though Jesus’ *“soul [was] sorrowful, even to death”* over all He was about to suffer, He prayed to His Father, *“not My will, but Yours be done”* (Lk. 22:42b). Scripture says that Jesus *“humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”* – Philippians 2:8. On the cross Jesus suffered everything we deserved, in our place, for our salvation.

Jesus is our example. When you’re weighed down with sorrow and exhaustion, turn to God in prayer that He help you and guide you and strengthen you to know His will for you and carry it out.

Jesus is our Substitute. For all the times you and I let sorrow and weariness keep us from trusting in God and humbly submitting to Him and following His lead, we’re saved by Jesus’ perfect life of trust in His Father and submission to His Father’s will.

In His weariness and grief Jesus turned to His Father, submitted to His Father’s will, and suffered and died. Although His Father’s will was so very difficult and painful, it accomplished our salvation. The Heavenly Father turned His Son’s weariness and grief into joy! In the sixteenth Psalm Jesus spoke prophetically of His victory over death: *“You will not leave My soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show Me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore”* (Ps. 16:10-11).

When Jesus rose from the dead, He turned His disciples weariness and deep sorrow into joy. When we go through times of weariness and sorrow, as we look to God and place our trust in Him and His Word, He turns our sorrow and weariness into joy so that we say with the psalmist, *“This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles”* (Ps. 34:6). *“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”* (Ps. 30:5b).

Rise, my soul, to watch and pray; From thy sleep awaken;  
Be not by the evil day Unawares o’ertaken;  
For the foe, Well we know,  
Oft his harvest reapeth While the Christian sleepeth.

But while watching, also pray To the Lord unceasing.  
He will free thee, be thy Stay, Strength and faith increasing.  
O Lord, bless In distress  
And let nothing swerve me From the will to serve Thee. Amen. (TLH #446:1, 5)