

Ezekiel 22—The Self-Destructing Nation

Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Revision and Introduction

Last week we saw God give another warning to the people of Judah that the Babylonian army was on its way. One might think that the promised exceedingly terrifying and severe judgement was a bit over the top, after all, Judah was similar to the other nations, so why was God going to judge them so severely? So now God goes through a moral checklist to show just how depraved the nation had become. The shocking thing is that the moral rot described is very similar to our own nation in the present day. In fact, the entire western world, if not the whole world, is also speeding down the road of self-destruction, and, like the people of Judah, there are no signs of repentance in our generation either. Without repentance, like the people of Nineveh showed when confronted by their sin by the prophet Jonah, there is also no hope for our generation. Also like the Israelites, we too are storing up serious judgement and wrath on ourselves, just like the many nations and empires who have gone before. One thing is certain; we have not learnt from history.

Romans 2:1-11 NLT paraphrase

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. ² And we know that God, in His justice, will punish anyone who does such things. ³ Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? ⁴ Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin [repentance]?

⁵ **But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself.** For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will judge everyone according to what they have done. ⁷ He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honour and immortality that God offers. ⁸ But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. ⁹ There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹⁰ But there will be glory and honour and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favouritism.

Chapter 22 of Ezekiel naturally breaks down into three sections.

1. The sins of Jerusalem (22:1-16)
2. Israel in the furnace (22:17-22)
3. The sins of the leaders (22:23-31)

1. The Sins of Jerusalem (22:1-16)

Ezekiel 22:1-16 NKJV

Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Now, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Yes, show her all her abominations! ³ Then say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “The city sheds blood in her own midst, that her time may come [for judgement]; and she makes idols within herself to defile herself. ⁴ You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and have defiled yourself with the idols which you have made. You have caused your days to draw near, and have come to the end of your years; therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all countries. ⁵ Those near and those far from you will mock you as infamous and full of tumult.

⁶ “Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you. ⁷ In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow. ⁸ You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths. ⁹ In you are men who slander to cause bloodshed; in you are those who eat on the mountains; in your midst they commit lewdness. ¹⁰ In you men uncover their fathers’ nakedness; in you they violate women who are set apart during their impurity. ¹¹ One commits abomination with his neighbour’s wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; and another in you violates his sister, his father’s daughter. ¹² In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase; you have made profit from your neighbours by extortion, and have forgotten Me,” says the Lord God.

¹³ “Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst. ¹⁴ Can your heart endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with you? I, the Lord, have spoken, and will do it. ¹⁵ I will scatter you among the nations, disperse you throughout the countries, and remove your filthiness completely from you. ¹⁶ You shall defile yourself in the sight of the nations; then you shall know that I am the Lord.” ’ ’ ”

Ezekiel 22:1-5 NKJV—Jerusalem, the bloody city, brings judgement on herself

Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Now, son of man, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Yes, show her all her abominations! ³ Then say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “The city sheds blood in her own midst, that her time may come; and she makes idols within herself to defile herself. ⁴ You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and have defiled yourself with the idols which you have made. You have caused your days to draw near, and have come to the end of your years; therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all countries. ⁵ Those near and those far from you will mock you as infamous and full of tumult.

v 3-4: One thing that is clear in all of this is the complete disregard for human life—**The city sheds blood in her own midst, that her time may come; and she makes idols within herself to defile herself.** ⁴ **You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed** (v 3-4). Injustice led to death and violence, especially of the righteous, the babies, and the sick and elderly. Stephen says of Jerusalem when recounting her sordid history, *Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?* (Acts 7:52). God also spoke through Jeremiah saying, *They have built pagan shrines to Baal in the valley of Ben-Hinnom, and there they sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing. What an incredible evil, causing Judah to sin so greatly!* (Jeremiah 32:35 NLT).

In our generation there is also the euthanasia or assisted suicide agenda—you don't have to be too smart to figure out that it's all about population control. Also, for an example of lawlessness, consider how in America those who are pro-life are being arrested for praying outside of abortion clinics, but those who are pro-death are getting away with firebombing pro-life pregnancy centres and other violent acts towards those who are pro-life. Also consider the great push we have in western culture to legalise abortion up to birth. These agendas are not hidden, and those who openly promote them are elected by popular vote. So what hope do we have to avoid God's judgement? Humanly speaking there is no hope. But in Christ we have hope, *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13). Like Judah was judged for the blood spilt within her, so will our sick nation and the world be judged for all our like sins. However, the church will not be a part of it—God will snatch us away to be with Him in Heaven for the duration of the seven year Tribulation while He judges this wicked world system—God doesn't judge the righteous with the wicked.

v 4-5 **Therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all countries:** Consider the lack of prestige and honour western nations have now. Our leaders are rightly seen as weak and people pleasers. They will do whatever it takes to stay in power, regardless of the negative long term consequences to the nation. The Western nations have become toothless tigers, caring more about saving and worshipping Gaia (mother earth) than about the wellbeing of their citizens.

Ezekiel 22:6-12 NKJV—*Israel's corrupt leadership*

“Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you. ⁷ In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow. ⁸ You have despised My holy things and profaned My Sabbaths. ⁹ In you are men who slander to cause bloodshed; in you are those who eat on the mountains; in your midst they commit lewdness. ¹⁰ In you men uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women who are set apart during their impurity. ¹¹ One commits abomination with his neighbour's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; and another in you violates his sister, his father's daughter. ¹² In you they take bribes to shed blood; you take usury and increase; you have made profit from your neighbours by extortion, and have forgotten Me,” says the Lord God.

The last few words in this section are the most important—**“you... have forgotten Me,” says the Lord God** (v 12). This is the reason for all the sins listed beforehand. Our world and our nation is purposefully forgetting God. God has been removed from schools, the legal system, politics, all kinds of media, etc. Where God and His righteousness are rejected and cast aside, corruption and lawlessness become established. Let's look at some of the fruits or consequences of rejecting God:

- Abuse of power by leaders to oppress and kill people
- The mistreatment of orphans and widows
- The rejection of what is good and right
- Lies and slander
- Idol worship involving sexual immorality and the killing of babies
- Rape, incest, homosexuality
- Bribes and injustice
- Economic extortion

Ezekiel 22:13-16 NKJV—God's judgement against the corrupt leaders

“Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst. ¹⁴ Can your heart endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with you? I, the Lord, have spoken, and will do it. ¹⁵ I will scatter you among the nations, disperse you throughout the countries, and remove your filthiness completely from you. ¹⁶ You shall defile yourself in the sight of the nations; then you shall know that I am the Lord.” ’ ’

v 13 **Behold, therefore, I beat My fists at the dishonest profit which you have made, and at the bloodshed which has been in your midst:** Here God shows in no uncertain terms just how angry He is at injustice. I feel sorry for the wicked leaders as they will have to give an account of their poor and selfish leadership to God.

v 14 **Can your heart endure, or can your hands remain strong, in the days when I shall deal with you?:** This is a very sobering question. We must all face God. Without Christ as our propitiation, our sacrifice who died in our place and so absorbed the full and complete wrath of God against sin, we would not stand. It's only because of the blood of the Passover Lamb that God's wrath passes over us. Truly, the leaders of this world consider themselves to be so strong, powerful, and untouchable. However, they are just weak fools who are blind to the majesty, holiness, and power of God. The leaders of Jerusalem would soon find out that they would not be able to stand before Almighty God when it came time for Him to judge them.

v 16 **Then you shall know that I am the Lord:** Again, God's judgements are not punitive, but are designed to bring us back into relationship with God, that we would truly *know* Him and submit to Him as Lord. **Those who refuse to know God by His blessings, will know Him by His discipline.**

2. Israel in the furnace (22:17-22)

Ezekiel 22:17-22 NKJV

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ¹⁸ “Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; they are all bronze, tin, iron, and lead, in the midst of a furnace; they have become dross from silver. ¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Because you have all become dross, therefore behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. ²⁰ As men gather silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into the midst of a furnace, to blow fire on it, to melt it; so I will gather you in My anger and in My fury, and I will leave you there and melt you. ²¹ Yes, I will gather you and blow on you with the fire of My wrath, and you shall be melted in its midst. ²² As silver is melted in the midst of a furnace, so shall you be melted in its midst; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have poured out My fury on you.’ ”

v 17 **The house of Israel has become dross to Me:** What was once a precious metal, valuable and treasured by all, was now just dross, the waste that is discarded when refining gold and silver. This is what happened to Israel nationally, and it can happen to us personally, and as a church. When we allow sin in the camp, when we start to live for ourselves, we become like dross—there is no value in what we do or who we are practically, and our character is base or worthless.

v 19 **I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem:** You can just imagine all the people from the surrounding villages and towns all running to Jerusalem, thinking that they would find safety and refuge there. Actually, they were putting themselves into the middle of God’s furnace of judgement and purification where they would experience extreme suffering—the sword, hunger, and disease.

“In such an hour the methods of patience and mercy are useless; it is only by the fiery furnace that the dross can be destroyed, and the corrupted silver be recovered.” (Morgan)

“The OT references to fire or furnace (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:20) are symbols for excruciating pain and suffering. These also evoke the notion of fire as a purifying agent and of ‘smelting’ as a way to spiritual regeneration (cf. Isaiah 1:25).” (Vawter and Hoppe)

3. The sins of the leaders (22:23-31)

Ezekiel 22:23-25, 28 NKJV—The sins of the prophets

And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²⁴ “Son of man, say to her: ‘You are a land that is not cleansed or rained on in the day of indignation.’ ²⁵ The conspiracy of her prophets in her midst is like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured people; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in her midst.

²⁸ Her prophets plastered them with untempered mortar, seeing false visions, and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ when the Lord had not spoken.

These false prophets were only out to fleece the people (see Jude and 2 Peter 2:1-3). They gave the people false hope and so persuaded the men to go out and fight against the Babylonians—thus **they have made many widows**. False prophecy destroys lives. Just because someone claims to be a prophet, it doesn’t mean you believe them.

Ezekiel 22:26 NKJV—The sins of the priests

²⁶ Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

Here we see the effects of false teaching—people are not encouraged to repent, and so end up living sinful lives. They cause God’s holy name to be blasphemed among the nations.

Ezekiel 22:27 NKJV—The sins of the Leaders

²⁷ Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain.

This is the effect of corrupt leadership. Instead of being faithful shepherds, leading the flock to good pasture and nurturing them, they were wolves devouring people to get rich.

Ezekiel 22:29 NKJV—The sins of the people

²⁹ The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger.

Again, this lack of basic respect for human dignity is fast disappearing in our nation as well. Cruelty, oppression, and mistreatment of strangers are also rampant in our society.

Ezekiel 22:29 NKJV—God seeks a godly leader to steer the nation from evil

So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one [thus the need to pray for godly leaders for our country]. ³¹ Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,” says the Lord God.

“The man God sought was not only a builder, but just as importantly was a man of prayer. Like Abraham (Genesis 20:7) and Moses (Exodus 32:9–14) and David (2 Samuel 24:15–18), God looked for one who would, through prayer, stand in the gap between a holy God and His disobedient, rebellious, profane people. This man in the gap would fight for and hopefully rescue God’s people in prayer.” (David Guzik)

God is calling us all to live godly lives, not only for our sakes, but for others as well. *If you keep yourself pure, you will be a special utensil for honourable use. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.* (2 Timothy 2:21). Consider the amazing positive influence godly leaders have had in the past.

Application: Forgetting God = not seeking Him with my whole heart (v 12)

We look at the Jewish leaders and say, “naughty, naughty”, but we also need to take a close look at ourselves. As a believer, I can *forget God* and live for myself while still pretending to live for Christ, just like the Jews did in Ezekiel’s day. Like them, I can go through all the outward motions of serving God, but if the affections of my heart are elsewhere—I *have forgotten God*. I can read my Bible every morning, but if I don’t obey it, then *I have forgotten God*. I can have an emotional experience during worship, but if I’m not submitted to God, *I have forgotten God*. I can do acts of service and evangelise, but if I’m doing it for my own self-fulfilment and/or recognition from others, *I have forgotten God*.

The only way to overcome this tendency to forget God and live for ourselves is to make a determined effort *not* to forget Him. For example, years ago, I memorised most of Romans chapter 8, but then I neglected to retain it in my memory by regularly reciting it. One day when I needed it, I didn’t have it. I basically had to go back and memorise it again. Now, usually weekly, I deliberately recall the memory verses that I need to fight the battles that I’m currently facing—they are my shield of faith (see Ephesians 6:16). Why? So I will not forget. It’s amazing just how fast I do and will forget if I don’t make a determined effort not to. Why? Because my sinful nature hates the Word of God and wants to be rid of it.

Simply put, neglecting God’s word is forgetting God. Why? See if you can see any similarities or common themes in the following verses from Psalm 119:

- I will delight myself in Your statutes; **I will not forget Your word.** (v 16)
- For I have become like a wineskin in smoke [dry and withered], Yet **I do not forget Your statutes.** (v 83)
- **I will never forget Your precepts**, for by them You have given me life. (v 93)
- My life is continually in my hand [in danger], yet **I do not forget Your law.** (109)
- I am small and despised, yet **I do not forget Your precepts.** (v 141)
- Consider my affliction and deliver me, for **I do not forget Your law.** (v 153)
- I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for **I do not forget Your commandments.** (v 176)

Notice all the “I will’s” and “I do’s” in these verses. The psalmist clearly understands that abiding in the word and staying close to God *is his responsibility*. You then respond to me, “Isn’t this legalism or works, trying to make yourself right in God’s sight?” No it’s not, and here’s why. Firstly, Jesus tells us that abiding in Him and His word is our responsibility.

John 15:7-8 NKJV

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

Notice the “if” in John 15:7. Also, the Holy Spirit through Paul gives us amazing insight into how this works in practice.

Philippians 2:12b-13 NKJV

...**work out** your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who **works in** you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

*“We simply **work out** what God has already **worked in us**”*

The Amplified bible adds meaning to this:

Philippians 2:12b-13 AMP

...**work out** (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).

13 [Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energising and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.

You see, as a disciple of Christ, I am simply responding to God because of all the amazing blessings that He has already given me—I am responding to His grace, mercy, and lovingkindnesses that He gave me when I was first saved (see 2 Peter 1:3).

Ephesians 1:3 NLT paraphrase

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has [past tense] blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with [in] Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-5a NLT paraphrase

By his divine power, God has [past tense] given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the one who called us to himself by means of His marvellous glory and excellence. ⁴ And because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to **share His divine nature and escape the world’s corruption caused by human desires.**

⁵ **In view of all this, make every effort to respond to [not earn] God’s promises.**

Of course, the ultimate blessing is the demonstration of God’s love for us is Calvary. If Jesus’ substitute death on the cross is not enough to motivate me to obedience, nothing will.

“Every time we look at the cross Christ seems to say to us, ‘I am here because of you. It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying.’ Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross.”
(John Stott)

In contrast, legalism or works is trying to earn God’s grace, mercy, and lovingkindnesses. Works based religion simply tries to appease God or manipulate Him —“If I do this for You, then You, God, are obligated to do this for me.”

As a believer, God has already given me the desire to be in His word, it’s now up to me to respond. Will I obey God by following that desire? Will I listen to the still small voice of the Holy Spirit as He leads me to greater intimacy with God? Or, will I ignore Him and instead choose to, by default, by doing nothing, forget God. *There is no neutral ground!* Not having a dedicated and resolute plan to remember and meditate on God’s Word is actually choosing to forget—even if I have good intentions to meditate on the Word. Why? Because if I don’t make the conscious and deliberate decision to forsake the world and follow Christ, then I won’t.

Again, legalism is trying to get right with God on our own strength. However, our responsibility as Christians is to simply follow and obey the urges and desires that God **has already put in us** as a part of our new nature. God will never force us to love Him. Forced love is rape. Rather, God always gives us free choice to be as close to Him as we choose to be.

“We are, each one of us, at this moment as close to God as we choose to be.” (John Stott)

In any relationship there are boundaries. These boundaries define our relationships. Being aware of, and taking responsibility for, my own choices is fundamental to any healthy relationship. However, too often I am like Adam and Eve, refusing to take personal responsibility for my decisions, and end up blaming God instead—“God how could you let me get into this mess!” Therefore, I must not ask God to do something *for me* that He’s already empowered *me to do*. I must take personal responsibility for the choices that define my part of my relationship with God. Let’s look at James to see what some of our individual or personal responsibilities are. Remember that God, by His Spirit living in us has already equipped and empowered us to obey. It’s like the gun is aimed and loaded, and all I have to do is pull the trigger. The question is, will I pull the trigger and put to death that sin that I am struggling with, or will I leave the gun and instead enjoy the sin that is enticing me.

James 4:7-10 NKJV

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Again, some of the responsibilities that define my side of my relationship with God are as follows. I must willingly choose to:

- Submit to God
- Draw near to God

- Cleanse my hands
- Purify my heart
- Mourn over my sin
- Humble myself in the sight of the Lord

Another example: overcoming temptation. Where there is temptation, God has already provided the way out.

1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

The only reason I fail to take the way of escape is that I have not prepared my heart to do so. *I have not died to self. I have not put to death the deeds of my sinful nature by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Romans 8:13).* I have not submitted that part of my sinful nature to God. Therefore, I have lost the battle before I even start. It takes faith to overcome temptation, but if I'm not in the Word of God, then my faith won't grow (see Romans 10:17), and I will be too weak to overcome the temptation—I have a defective or non-existent shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16).

Jesus is our example. In Gethsemane, Jesus submitted His will to the Father. Jesus' prayer basically went like this; **Father, help Me submit to You so that I only do what You want, and not what I want.** He gained the strength to endure the trial before He even faced the trial—He had defeated the temptation before it had even happened because He had prepared His heart to seek the Father by first submitting His will to Gods.

Luke 22:39-46 NKJV

Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. ⁴⁰ When He came to the place, He said to them, *Pray that you may not enter into [begin to experience, move into, pay a visit, come into] temptation.*

⁴¹ And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, ⁴² saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; **nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.**" ⁴³ **Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.** ⁴⁴ And being in agony, **He prayed more earnestly.** Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

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

As we read the account, we find that Jesus followed His own advice. He prayed to the Father that He would not enter into temptation, and as a result, was strengthened by God before the trial. **Consider that Jesus' submission to the Father didn't come easy—look at the literal blood, sweat, and tears Jesus shed. *If I'm not willing to go through this agony, then I will never overcome my sin. No-one ever said that dying to self was easy. If I want to live for God I must first die to self.***

Jesus was a perfect man, but still a man just like us. Knowing the horrific suffering and eventual death that He would experience went completely against His innate desire as a human to live and not die—man's built-in proclivity for self-preservation—thus why this was Jesus' greatest test. By submitting to the Father, Jesus was able to overcome his natural instinct of self-preservation—Jesus literally gave His life in His struggle against the natural desires of His human nature (albeit perfect).

Hebrews 12:3-4 NLT paraphrase

Think of all the hostility [Jesus] endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up. ⁴ **After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.**

Hebrews 4:15-16 NKJV

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

If we would just prepare our hearts to seek the Lord by praying to Him and asking for His power and grace to overcome the evil desires of our sinful nature, we would prevail over the sin. But this surrender or death to self takes work. It's not easy to give up what our sinful nature loves, but it is the only way. Here is an Old Testament Example which shows the real life struggle involved in overcoming enemies (our sinful nature). Like Jesus had to pray three times before His heart was fully submitted to the Father, so the Israelites had to pray, and unlike Jesus, but also like us, they also had to repent of their sins. As we read this account, notice how the people had to do something if they were going to overcome the enemy. Think of the enemies in the Promised Land as a type or picture of the evil world system, our sinful nature, and the devil.

1 Samuel 7:3-13 NLT—***Israel defeats their enemy the Philistines***

Then Samuel said to all the people of Israel, **"If you want to return to the Lord with all your hearts, get rid of your foreign gods and your images of Ashtoreth. Turn your hearts to the Lord and obey him alone; then he will rescue you from the Philistines."**

⁴ So the Israelites got rid of their images of Baal and Ashtoreth and worshiped only the Lord.

⁵ Then Samuel told them, "Gather all of Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you." ⁶ **So they gathered at Mizpah** and, in a great ceremony, drew water from a well and poured it out before the Lord. **They also went without food all day and confessed that they had sinned against the Lord.** (It was at Mizpah that Samuel became Israel's judge.)

⁷ When the Philistine rulers heard that Israel had gathered at Mizpah, they mobilised their army and advanced. The Israelites were badly frightened when they learned that the Philistines were approaching. ⁸ **"Don't stop pleading with the Lord our God to save us from the Philistines!"** they begged Samuel [demonstrating continued reliance on God and prayer]. ⁹ So Samuel took a young lamb and offered it to the Lord as a whole burnt offering. He pleaded with the Lord to help Israel, and the Lord answered him.

¹⁰ Just as Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines arrived to attack Israel. But the Lord spoke with a mighty voice of thunder from heaven that day, and the Philistines were thrown into such confusion that the Israelites defeated them. ¹¹ **The men of Israel chased them from Mizpah to a place below Beth-car, slaughtering them all along the way.**

¹² Samuel then took a large stone and placed it between the towns of Mizpah and Jeshanah. **He named it Ebenezer (which means "the stone of help"), for he said, "Up to this point the Lord has helped us!"**

¹³ So the Philistines were subdued and didn't invade Israel again for some time.

The combined power of the world, the flesh, and the devil and nothing compared to the power of God that dwells in us, but we must first submit if we are to experience this power.

Ephesians 1:19-20 NLT paraphrase

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honour at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.