

James 4:7 — Submitting to God - The Example of Jesus

Memory Verses:

James 1:2-4 NKJV

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Introduction

What do we need to live a life that pleases God, a life free from the pain and suffering that comes from following and obeying our sinful nature? To humble ourselves and ask God for His grace, His favour, His help, His power, His strength, His desires, His intervention in our lives — all undeserved, unearned, and unmerited, but all ours for the asking nonetheless. The only restriction that God places on us receiving His grace and favour is that we humbly ask.

So why do we still struggle with sin so much? Are we missing something. After all, James says that all we need to do is “...*submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). It can't be that hard, right?

If you were to ask me, “Are you submitted to God?” I would say, “Of course. I love God. I'd do anything for Him, even die for Him.” But this sounds like what the disciples said to Jesus the night that He was betrayed; of course they all abandoned Jesus.

Then you could ask me, “David, if you are 100% submitted to God, then why do you still struggle with loving your wife and children at all times?” I would then have to admit that I am not always submitted to God, because if I was completely or 100% submitted to God, then I would not be having problems loving my wife and children 100% of the time.

I think that we all recognise the fact that we struggle with various sins and are all willing to go as far as admitting that, “Well, nobody's perfect.” However, it's harder to go the next step and realise or admit that in those instances, I am not submitted to God. Why? Because it means that I was instead submitted to satan, I was therefore satan's slave and was carrying out satan's desires instead of God's — in that area of my life, and/or at that time, I was controlled by my sinful nature.

Again, I failed or sinned because I was not submitted to God. Why? Because if I was really submitted to God, then I wouldn't have sinned. I would have been controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit and my actions, words, thoughts and inner motives would have all been pleasing to God and would have demonstrated the fruits of the Spirit — love, righteousness etc.

Romans 8:5-6 NLT

⁵ Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. ⁶ So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. ⁷ For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will.

Therefore, I believe that recognising that there are parts of my life that I have not submitted to God, and are therefore given over to satan, is the first step to overcoming sin and living a life that pleases God. Again, it is hard because to admit that a part of my life is not submitted to God. Why? Because if I am still controlled by a fear or an addiction or unforgiveness etc, it means that by default that area of my life is being controlled by satan. Any area of my life that is not submitted to God is by default submitted to satan. Therefore, in those areas of my life where I have given Satan a foothold (so to speak), I am living, talking, and thinking like satan — selfishly and pridefully.

We learned over the last several weeks that it is pride that stops us from submitting to God. Pride makes us independent of God, and therefore keeps us as a slave of satan. Remember the quote from Spurgeon last week:

“I desire to whisper one little truth in your ear, and I pray that it may startle you: *You are submitting even now.* You say, ‘Not I; I am lord of myself.’ I know you think so, but all the while you are submitting to the devil. The verse before us hints at this. ‘Submit yourselves unto God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.’ If you do not submit to God you never will resist the devil, and you will remain constantly under his tyrannical power. Which shall be your master, God or devil, for one of these must? No man is without a master.”

So this week, I want to focus on one thing — how to submit to God. I will use Jesus as an example.

Let’s remind ourselves of what James wrote in chapter 4v1-10 and then we will study how Jesus modelled or demonstrated it.

James 4:1-10 NKJV

Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

***“God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble.”***

⁷ 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.

Jesus — Fully Man and Fully God

Some may say, “Why would Jesus have to submit to God the Father? He was already God and already perfect, born with a perfect human nature, and He lived a sinless life. Why would Jesus have to submit to His Father?” Yes, Jesus has always been God, and He was definitely born with a sinless or uncorrupted human nature, and He definitely lived a sinless life. There are no questions about these truths.

However, the bible tells us some amazing things about Jesus and His humanity. While Jesus was fully God, He was also fully man. Firstly, just like we as human beings have limitations and weaknesses because of the frailty or weakness of our human nature and body, so did Jesus while living on the earth as a man.

The gospels record that, as a man or human being, Jesus got tired and weary (Matthew 8:24, John 4:6), hungry (Matthew 4:2, 21:18), was grieved or hurt by other’s sin and hardness of heart (Mark 3:5), and experienced all the emotions that we do (e.g. Joy — John 15:11, and sorrow and grief — Luke 19:41, John 11:35).

What does it mean that Jesus learned obedience by the things He suffered (Hebrews 5:8)?

Secondly, just as we have to grow in discipline and character and obedience, so did Jesus according to His human nature. Remember that to be qualified as a compassionate high priest, Jesus had to experience life as we do. Our High Priest must be able to sympathise with us and relate to us because he knows what it’s like to be us.

Hebrews 5:4-10 NLT

⁴ And no one can become a high priest simply because he wants such an honour. He must be called by God for this work, just as Aaron was. ⁵ That is why Christ did not honour himself by assuming he could become High Priest. No, he was chosen by God, who said to him,

“You are my Son.

Today I have become your Father.”

⁶ And in another passage God said to him,

“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷ While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with a loud cry and tears, to the one who could rescue him from death. And God heard his prayers because of his deep reverence for God. ⁸ **Even though Jesus was God’s Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered.** ⁹ **In this way, God qualified him as a perfect High Priest,** and he became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. ¹⁰ And God designated him to be a High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

The context of this passage is Jesus being qualified to be our High Priest, the one who can understand human sorrow, suffering, weakness, and pain because He also experienced life here on earth and endured much hardship. Jesus was rejected (even by His family), betrayed, falsely accused, misunderstood, misrepresented, unappreciated, often worked to the point of exhaustion, and lived His entire life in poverty.

As learning, suffering, and death are part of the life experience for all people, Jesus was no exception. Although Jesus never sinned, He experienced temptation and human weakness. Because of this, Jesus can fully relate to our struggles and is therefore a compassionate high priest.

Here is a snapshot of Jesus' life when He was twelve years old.

Luke 2:45-52

⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶ Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, **sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.** ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously."

⁴⁹ And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

⁵¹ Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, **and was subject [obedient] to them,** but His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² **And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,** and in favour with God and men.

Jesus Increased in Stature

Here we learn that Jesus knows what it is like to grow up and experience all the pains and difficulties of growing up and going through the various stages of life — a baby, a toddler, a young child, an adolescent, a young adult, and then a fully grown man. Jesus knows what it's like to go through puberty. Jesus knows what it's like to get pimples. Jesus knows that it can be difficult to get along with your parents. Jesus, as a human, increased in stature; meaning that He experienced what it is like to both physically and emotionally grow up.

Jesus also experienced loss in His family. His dad, Joseph, died at some stage before Jesus started His ministry. Jesus, being the oldest son, would have had the responsibility of being the bread winner for the family during that time.

Jesus Increased in Wisdom

Jesus studied the Scriptures. At 12 years of age, He was asking questions of the religious leaders. Being fully human, Jesus had to learn things just like we do. Just like we have to invest much time into understanding the scriptures with the goal of knowing God and experiencing a deeper relationship with Him, so did Jesus. Jesus' human brain wasn't born preprogrammed with all knowledge of the scriptures. Like everyone else, Jesus had to learn to read, and then learn to memorise scripture and cultivate a devotional life with the Father as He grew older.

Jesus Learned Obedience

We now come back to Hebrews 5:8-9a NKJV

"...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected [made whole or complete], He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,..."

What does *He learned obedience* mean? Gotquestions.com gives a good explanation: ‘Jesus “learned obedience” not in the sense that He was prone to disobedience and had to bring rebelliousness under control, but in the sense that He fully entered the human experience. As a child, He obeyed His parents (Luke 2:51); as an adult, He obeyed the Law (Matthew 5:17) and fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). All His life, Jesus completely fulfilled the Father’s will (John 8:29; 15:10; Hebrews 10:9). He knew what obedience was prior to His incarnation, of course, but He “learned” obedience on earth by experiencing it. In every situation, no matter how difficult, the Son was obedient to the Father: “The Sovereign Lord has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. I offered my back to those who beat me” (Isaiah 50:5–6).’

Jesus Learned Obedience by the Things He Suffered

What does this mean? Jesus willingly endured a challenging process that transformed Him. Remember our current memory verses.

James 1:2-4 NKJV

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect [make whole or complete] and complete, lacking nothing.

See how similar this is to Hebrews 5:8-9.

Hebrews 5:8-9

Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been **perfected** [made whole or complete], He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

Trials — temptations, persecution, and hard times — are what God uses to grow us, to make us complete or perfect. The same was true for Jesus. The Greek word translated perfect in James 1:2-4 is the same Greek word as translated “perfect” in Hebrews 2:10 and 5:9. It means to make whole or complete.

The same though is expressed in Hebrews 2:10.

Hebrews 2:10

For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, **to make the captain of their salvation perfect [whole or complete] through sufferings.**

Again, Jesus was made whole or complete or mature by what He suffered, by the trials that He went through — just like us.

Gotquestion.com puts it well when it says: “Jesus chose to endure an unpleasant, challenging process because it was the will of His Father for His brief time on earth. After that process Jesus had been “made perfect.” It is crucial to note that *perfect* here means “complete,” as in finishing a full course of training or education—or, in Jesus’ case, He finished an altogether righteous human life and had a complete [experiential] understanding of human frailty and suffering.”

The Greatest Example of Submission Ever — Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

James 4:7, *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”* There is no greater example of this than Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus faced what I believe what was the hardest battle of all — the submission of His human will to the Father’s will. What I will try to show today, is that the battle to control the lusts and evil desires of our sinful nature happens before the event or temptation. Basically it works like this; we wrestle with a particular sinful desire before God in prayer, actively submitting that part of our life to God. We accept God’s invitation to come to the throne of grace and find help in time of need — we submit to God and draw near to God. Then the next time we face the temptation we will be less likely to succumb to it. Why? Because the desire to do it will already have been put to death or at least have been weakened.

In effect we are preparing our hearts to seek and serve the Lord by actively seeking the Lord’s help to overcome or submit those areas of our lives that we struggle with at the level of desire or will.

Let’s see how Jesus submitted the will of His perfect human nature to the Father.

Mark 14:32-42 NLT

They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, “Sit here while I go and pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He became deeply troubled and distressed. ³⁴ **He told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with Me.”**

³⁵ He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass Him by. ³⁶ **“Abba, Father,” He cried out, “everything is possible for You. Please take this cup of suffering away from Me. Yet I want Your will to be done, not Mine.”**

³⁷ **Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? ³⁸ Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”**

³⁹ Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. ⁴⁰ And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.

⁴¹ Then He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

As we read earlier, submitting to God means that we draw near to God. Here we see Jesus wrestling with His will and making the painful and difficult choice to submit to the Father’s will. How did He do it? By watching and praying. Jesus took the issue He was struggling with to the Father and wrestled with it in prayer until He had the victory. After this point, Jesus in a sense had it easy. The struggle was over. He was

submitted to the Father. The Father's will had become His will. The horrors of the cross were now what Jesus, even in His humanity, was content to endure. He had decided on His course, and there was no turning back, no hesitation.

How long did Jesus pray for?

Matthew 26:40 tells us that Jesus prayed for one hour the first time. Most likely, it was the same for the two subsequent times of prayer, as they were also long enough for all the disciples to fall asleep again. Luke's gospel gives us more information.

Luke 22:39-46 NLT

³⁹ Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. ⁴⁰ There he told them, **"Pray that you will not give in to temptation."**

⁴¹ He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴² "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." ⁴³ **Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him.** ⁴⁴ **He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.**

⁴⁵ **At last he stood up again** and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. ⁴⁶ **"Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation."**

What was the Father asking Jesus to do that Jesus, in His humanity, found exceedingly difficult to obey or submit to?

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 NLT

¹³ See, My servant will prosper;
He will be highly exalted.

¹⁴ But many were amazed when they saw Him.

**His face was so disfigured He seemed hardly human,
and from his appearance, one would scarcely know He was a man.**

¹⁵ And He will startle many nations.

Kings will stand speechless in His presence.

For they will see what they had not been told;

they will understand what they had not heard about.

Chapter 53

¹ Who has believed our message?

To whom has the Lord revealed his powerful arm?

² My Servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot,
like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance,
nothing to attract us to him.

³ **He was despised and rejected—**

a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our backs on Him and looked the other way.

He was despised, and we did not care.

⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses He carried;
it was our sorrows that weighed Him down.
And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God,
a punishment for His own sins!

⁵ **But He was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.**

He was beaten so we could be whole.

He was whipped so we could be healed.

⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away.
We have left God's paths to follow our own.

**Yet the Lord laid on Him
the sins of us all.**

⁷ **He was oppressed and treated harshly,
yet He never said a word.**

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter.

And as a sheep is silent before the shearers,
He did not open his mouth.

⁸ **Unjustly condemned,
He was led away.**

No one cared that He died without descendants,
that His life was cut short in midstream.

**But He was struck down
for the rebellion of my people.**

⁹ He had done no wrong
and had never deceived anyone.

But He was buried like a criminal;
He was put in a rich man's grave.

¹⁰ **But it was the Lord's good plan to crush Him
and cause Him grief.**

Yet when **His life is made an offering for sin,**
He will have many descendants.

He will enjoy a long life,
and the Lord's good plan will prosper in His hands.

¹¹ When He sees all that is **accomplished by His anguish,**
He will be satisfied.

And because of **His experience,**
My righteous servant will make it possible
for many to be counted righteous,
for He will bear all their sins.

¹² I will give Him the honours of a victorious soldier,
because He exposed himself to death.

He was counted among the rebels.

He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.

Notice here all the incredibly difficult things that Jesus had to endure as He suffered and died in our place. Remember that the events of calvary were so distressing to Jesus that He sweat great drops of blood and God the Father had to send an angel to strengthen Him. *"Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood"* (Luke 22:43).

How did Jesus overcome the temptation to take the easy way out, to avoid the incredibly intense, physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering involved in taking our place as the once for all time sacrifice for the sins of all mankind?

We all know that the easy way out is simply to give into the sin. Then the struggle is over. But Jesus never took the easy way out. Look at how He prepared His heart to obey the will of the Father.

Isaiah 50:4-7 NLT

⁴ The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom,
so that I know how to comfort the weary.

**Morning by morning he wakens me
and opens my understanding to his will.**

⁵ **The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me,
and I have listened.**

I have not rebelled or turned away.

⁶ I offered my back to those who beat me
and my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard.

I did not hide my face
from mockery and spitting.

⁷ **Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.**

**Therefore, I have set my face like a stone,
determined to do his will.**

And I know that I will not be put to shame.

This is an amazing passage, and shows how Jesus actively, day by day, morning by morning, made time to seek relationship with the Father, to know the will of the Father, and to submit to the Father's will, so He would "*always do those things that please Him*" (John 8:29). Jesus strengthened His spirit by spending time with the Father and in the word of God, and daily made a conscious and deliberate decision to obey the Father. Therefore, when any trial came, especially Calvary, Jesus was able to willingly obey.

Who was Jesus praying to and who should we pray to?

Jesus prayed to His Abba or Daddy Father (Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42). Jesus knew where to go to find help (also see Isaiah 50:7). Jesus also commands us to pray directly to the Father.

John 16:23-24 NKJV

"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask [keep on asking], and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

How long did Jesus pray for?

Matthew 26:40 tells us that Jesus prayed for one hour the first time. He prayed three times. That makes three hours, assuming He prayed for an hour each time. Jesus was putting into practice persevering prayer. Jesus here shows us how to keep on asking, keep on knocking, and keep on seeking (Matthew 7:7-8).

However, this was not a one time event. As we just read, “Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will. ⁵ The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me, and I have listened. I have not rebelled or turned away” (Isaiah 50:4-5 NLT). Every morning Jesus prayed to the Father, listening for God’s will and submitting to it. Submission to the Father was a daily event for Jesus. Because Jesus prayed everyday and was in the word every day, He was able to obey every day, and experience the joy of the Lord every day.

The point here is that I must be willing to go the distance, to run the hard yards, to make the time to pray that I will be submitted to God in specific areas of my life. Fasting is also a good tool to use here as well. Again, the battle against sin is won on our knees before the temptation comes. An unprepared, untrained army will be defeated; only an army who takes the time to prepare and train, and is properly equipped, will experience victory.

We can’t just think, well, I’ll just wait for the next battle and be strong then. No it doesn’t work like that. Like any good soldier or army, we prepare now so we can win later. Victories don’t just happen, they are prepared and planned. We reap what we sow (see Galatians 6:7-8)

What was Jesus praying for?

Jesus was praying for the strength to not give into temptation, for the strength to obey the will of the Father, that He would have the strength to submit to the Father.

Isaiah 50:7 NLT

**Because the Sovereign Lord helps me,
I will not be disgraced.**

Therefore, I have set my face like a stone,
determined to do his will.

And I know that I will not be put to shame.

Compare this verse to Hebrews 4:14-16 and notice the similarities.

Hebrews 4:14-16 NLT

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ **So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.**

Jesus was praying for and seeking God’s strength to not give into temptation, for the strength to obey the will of the Father, that He would be willing to submit to the Father. He was setting His face like a stone — meaning to be: uncompromising, unchanging, determined, resolved, committed to, doing the will of the Father. This is the example that we need to follow. If Jesus needed to do this to have victory over sin, then how much more do we with our sinful nature!

What does Jesus command us to pray for specifically?

Jesus commands us to watch and pray that you will not enter into temptation.

Luke 22:40

⁴⁰ There he told them, **“Pray that you will not give in to temptation.”**

Mark 14:37-38 NLT

Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? ³⁸ **Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.**”

This is where the battle is at; we must bring our desires into subjection. In my experience, we tend to focus, for example, on not doing a particular thing, but fail to deal with the desires that cause us to want to do the particular thing. The problem is that if we continue thinking a certain way, or desiring a certain thing, then we will eventually act on that desire. It’s all about cause and effect.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 NLT

We are human, but we don’t wage war as humans do. ⁴ **We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.**

What was it like for Jesus to wrestle with the temptation to skip the cross, to take the easy way out?

Sheer agony of spirit. He sweat great drops of blood (Luke 22:44). Nothing compares to the intensity of Jesus cry for the Father’s help. Jesus was honest in saying that, in His humanity, He wasn’t looking forward to being separated from the Father, experiencing the wrath of God due to sin being poured out on Himself, and enduring the physical pain of the torture and crucifixion.

What will it be like for us when we to face our own gethsemane; when we make the conscious decision to put to death our sinful nature? Sheer agony — it’s going to hurt — a part of us is dying. Remember that when we submit to God, we are putting ourselves (our old selves, the part of us that hates God and is in rebellion against God, the part of us that loves to sin), to death.

Romans 6:10-11 NLT

When [Jesus] died, He died once to break the power of sin. But now that He lives, He lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you also should consider yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

Notice that the only way to live for Christ is to be dead to sin. Consider the following verses:

Romans 8:12-13 NLT

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. ¹³ For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live.

Colossians 3:1-5 NLT

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, **set your sights** on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God's right hand. ² **[Choose to] Think about the things of heaven**, not the things of earth. ³ **For you died to this life**, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.

⁵ **So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you.** Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

Galatians 5:24-25 NLT

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have **nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.** ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

Conclusion and Application

Now, what did the disciples do while Jesus was praying? Sleep. What instruction did Jesus give them? **"Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak"** (Mark 14:38 NLT). Spending quality, undistracted time with the Lord, where we consciously make a deliberate choice wrestle with and agonise over the specific issues that we are struggling with, is what makes us strong. Those sinful desires need to be put to death. Victory over our pride, sin, addictions, vices, whatever it may be for us, will only come after we have laid it before the Lord and surrendered it to Him. The battle is won on our knees. Victory over sin doesn't just happen. We intentionally make time with the Lord to present our requests to Him and ask and keep on asking, day by day, for His grace to help us in our time of need.

So this is where the battle really is. It's so hard to make the time to spend with the Lord, Instead, just like the disciples, we are prone to, literally, sleep the time away, and then wonder why we fall on our face. Some people TV the time away, or sport the time away, or recreate the time away, or gym the time away, or work the time away, or socialise the time away, or family the time away, or game the time away, or read the time away. If we waste the time that God has given us to spend with Him, the result is always the same; we will not have put to death the desires of our sinful nature and will therefore, eventually, give into the temptation.

Three times Jesus wrestled with the same question, each time submitting to the Father. What an example Jesus is for us. The take home message today is that submitting to God and drawing near to God will not come easy. Our sinful nature is stubborn and will not give in easily. Often the temptation will come back again and again. We must be disciplined and intentional if we are going to have success. Any halfheartedness or complacency will result in us failing and falling into temptation. We are all in or we are all out. There is no middle ground. We need to be willing put the old man to death, to crucify him, to be willing to live without those worldly things our sinful nature loves by putting to death the desires for those things that lurk in our hearts. Always remember the example of Jesus:

Hebrews 12:3-4

Think of all the hostility he 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.