

## THE SEVEN LAWS OF INCREASE AND PROTECTION

### Part 3. The Law of Discipline in God's Kingdom

#### Matthew 26:40-43 (KJV)

<sup>40</sup> And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

<sup>41</sup> Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

<sup>42</sup> He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

<sup>43</sup> And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

As we read, just before His arrest, Jesus was in the **Garden of Gethsemane**, said to His disciples, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (**Matthew 26:41**).

The command came after Jesus had been praying to the Father and had found the disciples sleeping instead of praying (verses 38–40). He had admonished them to stay awake and pray with Him, but "their eyes were heavy" (verse 43), and they kept falling asleep. They slept right up until the time the armed mob came to take Jesus away (verses 45–47).

Because "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," the disciples were caught unawares in Gethsemane. The word for "spirit" in this passage is the Greek word *pneuma*, which in this context refers to the soul of man or the mind. The word for "flesh" refers to the human body and nature, with its moral and physical frailties. When Jesus first found the disciples sleeping, He said to Peter, "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" (**Matthew 26:40**), and then afterward told them all to watch and pray in order to avoid temptation.

The disciples' spirits were willing to do what was right. In fact, just a few minutes earlier, all of them had pledged their lives to Jesus: "Peter declared, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the other disciples said the same" (**Matthew 26:35**). But, as it turned out, they couldn't even pray with Jesus for any length of time. Their flesh was weak.

They fell asleep because of their physical human weakness. They were tired. By affirming that “the spirit is willing,” Jesus was saying that He knew the disciples *wanted* to stay awake and pray, but the weakness of the flesh had overpowered the spiritual desire to pray and watch. Jesus was not scolding them but exhorting them to beware of the weakness of the flesh. The Lord Himself was fighting the same struggle against the flesh, but He had overcome it (verse 39).

The story of the disciples in Gethsemane rings true for all of us. We can so easily be distracted from prayer, reading God’s Word, worship, or doing a kind act. We can be driven to sin by things like hunger, exhaustion, sexual desire, feeling too cold or too hot, thirst, pain, and even a persistent itch.

The flesh shouts when it wants something, and the noise it makes can easily quench the desires of the spirit. Even when the spirit is willing to do whatever God asks, the flesh remains weak. There is a great need to discipline the flesh to obey God’s Word.

### **What does it mean to watch and pray? How can that help us succeed against the weaknesses of the flesh?**

We know that we can ask God for whatever we need. Jesus made a special clear in **John 14:13** that whatever we ask, “in His name” He will do it. The phrase *in His name* means “according to His will.” This is the act of having the strength to obey, to worship, to do what is right and true according to God’s will? Of course! Jesus will answer the prayer for spiritual strength to overcome the flesh. When we feel the weakness of the flesh about to overpower us, we can always pray.

Being watchful in prayer just like everything else requires discipline and it is the major weapon we have against the weakness of the flesh. Apostle Paul said in **1 Corinthians 10:13**, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it”.

Spiritual watchfulness sees the temptation coming and prompts prayer. The fact that the flesh is a natural ally to temptation makes spiritual alertness more important. **Proverbs 22:3** puts it this way; “The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and pay the penalty”

The greatest weakness of the flesh is the fear that it will not be taken care of. Jesus spoke to this fear in **Matthew chapter 6 verses 25-26** and said, “I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?”

### **What does it really mean by the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak?**

The spirit of a believer is willing to follow God, (It is disciplined) but **the flesh** is weak. The demands, desires, and fears of human nature can pull us way off track. Satan has set up the world to appeal to the weaknesses of the flesh: lust, greed, gluttony, and other sins which are directly related to the demands of the body. This is the reason almost every advertisement you **see and hear** speaks to the fulfillment of the lust of the flesh to sell what is being advertised.

However, when we watch and pray—and remain spiritually alert appealing to God for help, we can find strength in a time of need (see **Psalm 46:1 and Hebrews 4:16**). **John 2:1-2** declares; “And when we fail, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”

### **Warning to those living according to the dictates of the flesh**

#### **Romans 8:11-14**

<sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

<sup>12</sup> So then, [@](#)brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but not to our flesh [our human nature, our worldliness, our sinful capacity], to live according to the [impulses of the] flesh [our nature without the Holy Spirit]—

<sup>13</sup> for if you are living according to the [impulses of the] flesh, you are going to die. But if [you are living] by the [power of the Holy] Spirit you are *habitually* putting to death the *sinful* deeds of the body, you will [really] live *forever*.

<sup>14</sup> For all who are *allowing themselves to* be led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

None of the Laws of Increase will have any effect if we lack discipline. God wants to give us opportunities to increase, but those opportunities that looks like a hard work are the very one that will get us victory. There are some basic actions we can apply to have discipline in our heads, our hearts, and our habits, so that we might experience the increase God wants to give us. First, we can discipline our heart with diligent prayer, praise, and pursuit of God. Secondly, we can discipline our head and our tricky minds by studying Scripture, being selective with our thoughts, and being strategic about what we let ourselves think about. Thirdly, we can practice discipline with our habits. We can create good habits by doing six things: Pray often, worship often, serve often, give often, love often, and forgive often.