

The Hour of Temptation

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- [0 : 00] She's a show of hands. Anyone ever heard of Theophilus Thistle? Anyone? Theophilus Thistle? Not counted if you were at church this morning.
- No? We've had very few people. Let me tell you about Theophilus Thistle. Theophilus Thistle was a successful thistle sifter. He sifted a sift full of unsifted thistles and he thrust 3,000 siftles.
- Oh my goodness, the first time all day. He thrust 3,000 thistles through the thick of his thumb. That's right, 3,000 thistles through the thick of his thumb.
- Oh, that's the third time I've said it today and about the 3,000th time I've said it this week. I wonder if you've ever said to yourself or a group of people, Oh, I got this. I can do it.
- I have. I've been saying it to myself all week as I've been getting to know Theophilus Thistle. At HTY, our youth group, we learn a memory verse each term.
- [1 : 14] And each week we encourage those who've memorised it to come up and stand right here actually and perform it. And we put it to pop music to help remember it. And once a year seven boy volunteered and I was pretty encouraged because year seven boys haven't over the years been that keen.
- And I think it was maybe his second week. And I was like, yes, power to him. He came up, the music started. I counted him in, one, two, three, four. And he stood there like...
- Lips moving, nothing coming out. Halfway through I said to him, Do you know the words? And he was like, nah. And just walks off.
- It's a true story. You can ask a lot of people in this room. I'm thinking, wow, how is that confidence? I can do this. I don't need to know.
- I'll figure it out. Like you when you go into exams. But can you remember where we left off?
- [2 : 18] Jesus finishing with the apostles. But warning of something. Of what? Sifting.
- And so we come, don't we, tonight, to the hour of Theophilus. The hour of temptation. The sift. You'll see on the outline that I'm going to take things tonight a bit differently.
- So have your Bibles ready. The meal is over. Verse 39. Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives. This is what he would do each day at the moment.
- Teach in Jerusalem at day. Mount Olives at night. Verse 40. On reaching the place, he said to them, the disciples, pray. How long ago do you think it was that he said, sifted by Satan?
- About half an hour? It's not that long a walk. Is Satan there on the Mount of Olives? Is Satan, as Peter would later write down, prowling around like a roaring lion?
- [3 : 26] Pray, Jesus says, that you will not fall into temptation. He warned them that temptation was close. So the command, pray. The danger, temptation.
- The enemy, Satan, to lead them astray. 41. He withdrew. About a stone's throw away and knelt down and prayed.

Jesus always sought time with his father. Sometimes all night he practices what he preaches, doesn't he? What did he pray? 42. Father, if you're willing, take this cup.

What kind of prayer is this? I wonder if you've ever prayed in desperation. Remember last week we looked back to verse, sorry, chapter 9, when he resolutely set his face.

He knows what's coming, doesn't he? Is it a complaint? Why have you done this? Why would you do this? I don't know why you're putting me through this. No, it's not, is it?

[4 : 33] If you're willing, take this away, but not my will, but yours. Not a glutton for punishment. If there's another way, that would be okay. But your will before mine.

I wonder if you have or would pray a prayer like this. Father, if you're willing, take this pain away only if you're willing.

Because I care more about what you want than about what I want right now. Jesus prayed. Would his father respond?

43. An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. God is not distant. God hears. God responds. Not a change in situation, but strength from the angel who appears.

Some may say, well, when I pray, an angel never appears. So that's something. Let's keep reading. 44. For being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly.

[5 : 43] Luke says he prays in anguish. More than that, this famous description of sweat like drops of blood. When you hear something lots of times, it's easy for it to lose its impact, isn't it?

Can anyone imagine the kind of overwhelming anxiety that would cause sweat to drop like blood? If we can't relate to being sentenced to death, what situation would even cause that feeling?

Final exam? Medical tests? Operation results? Speaking in front of people for the first time?

Peers? Professors? Maybe a big performance. Your palms are sweaty. Knees weak. Arms are heavy.

There's vomit on your sweater already. Mom's spaghetti. Jesus' anxiety.

[6 : 49] Sorry. Jesus' anxiety is on a whole other level, isn't it? It's hard to imagine. It's hard to... You can't even sweat like blood.

What's interesting is how God answers his prayer. Does God take his pain away? No. No. No. No. But strength to endure. No. But strength to endure. To do God's will.

God does not. I wonder if God's love. I wonder if people ever share with you their thoughts or attitude about why God either doesn't exist or isn't good because of the way people continue to suffer.

if God was one of those things he would end it right people heard that I reckon this passage is one of the best responses to that problematic view why because God's son doesn't have his pain taken away nor is he ignored by God what does this mean that God's will and our will even the will of his own son are not always the same people have argued to me that if God was good then he would take pain and suffering away I totally get that from a human point of view how could I not how could you not we suffer as humans I want the pain to go away just like you do but if God took the pain and suffering away in this moment what would not have been forged new covenant new kingdom new relationship new life does this mean we always figure out why we're suffering like we did with Jesus no not necessarily but it does mean that God's will is always right and those who entrust themselves to it will be vindicated

Jesus went to prayer because of the trials and challenges ahead of him he left the disciples with a warning pray that you don't fall into temptation 45 he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples and he found them asleep exhausted from sorrow while Jesus was praying seeking his father's help in his hour of need desiring relief and to do his father's will does he find his friends and followers in prayerful support praying for themselves and for him no finds them sleeping we've got Jesus overwhelmed with anxiety turning to his father for strength and the disciples overwhelmed with emotional weariness giving into sleep rather than finding strength in prayer I'll be the first to admit that praying with eyes closed in bed is a great way to lose track and fall asleep

[9 : 56] I'm sure one or two of you could relate so 46 he says again get up and pray so you will not fall into temptation he warns again pray don't fall don't enter unlike their master who remained vigilant his followers weren't with him get up Jesus says pray don't fall 47 while he was still speaking a crowd came up the man who was called Judas one of the twelve was leading them out of nowhere Judas appears why wasn't he praying with the disciples or sleeping with them we haven't heard that he even left the last time he was mentioned was when Satan entered him in verse 3 he must have been at the table for some of the meal but Judas isn't alone is he there's a crowd with him and what's he doing there 47 goes on

Judas approached to kiss him but we don't see it land do we Jesus interrupts in 48 Judas are you betraying the son of man with a kiss previously in this gospel Luke has shown kisses as highly affectionate greetings can you imagine the implications of such an intimate greeting yet betrayal from a friend this kiss was like a knife through the heart he's using his access to say sorry he's able to come close and plant one because he's a friend but he's using his access his ability to come close to say this is the one how treacherous the rest of the disciples eventually realized what's going on when Jesus followers saw what was going to happen they said

Lord should we strike with our swords and don't you love the disciples do you feel sometimes they're just like over excited teenagers yeah should we go should we strike only moments ago Jesus had said bring a sword maybe this is it and it's funny isn't it the things they remember but they aren't known for their wisdom in the gospels are they they might say I got this but like Peter they aren't ready for what's coming if they knew the scriptures the shepherd will be struck the sheep will be scattered would they have responded differently they asked if they should strike but did they wait for an answer verse 50 one of them struck the servant of the high priest cutting off his ear in their panic they gave in once again three times Jesus had told them he would be handed over to death yes he told them to protect themselves but not for this but I wonder if any of you can relate have you have been around people who just love to drag the name of God through the mud or just or other similar things like for example because of what some church leaders did therefore all church leaders or all churches or all church goers have you wanted to respond strongly you don't know what you're talking about you just back off you really want to give someone a piece of your mind maybe not chop their ear off but talk it off but what did we see Jesus do earlier that disciples didn't do he went to his father in prayer not my will but yours does this mean an argument is never the right course no but do your emotions ever get the better of you do you replay the conversation in your mind in order to put your opponent down what would your response be if you were seeking your heavenly father's strength this fight is not what Jesus wants 51 no more of this he touched the man's ear and healed him

Jesus isn't on the offensive he heals the enemy true to character but do you notice he also doesn't simply hand himself over he challenges them 52 am I leading a rebellion that you've come with swords and clubs every day I was with you in the temple courts and you did not lay a hand on me but this is your hour when darkness reigns he calls out their hypocrisy and even their impotence in having to come at night and more than this he says it's their hour when darkness reigns they aren't simply moving under the cover of darkness he's talking about the darkness of their hearts and their actions consider this hour compared to Jesus hour from the previous passage one with shady deals and corrupt authorities and exchanges behind closed doors to get rid of irritatingly helpful people the other an hour of fulfillment new covenant new kingdom are they connected?

yes are they planned? yes are those involved responsible for their actions? of course 54 they seized him they led him away and took him to the house of the high priest all the decisions have been made including Peter he's now the disciple in focus following at a distance he's got this there's only one brave enough to follow he's going to see what will happen 55 when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together Peter sat down with them we've got a bit of a scene change here don't we?

[16 : 33] it's suddenly a bit cozy peaceful and quiet the courtyard of the high priest and Peter's in there too just walks in like he belongs playing it cool you ever done that?

there's a way to do it isn't there? be where you don't belong there's a way not to do it of course you know look like everybody else don't stick out do as they do someone asks can I help you?

no thanks Peter grabs a seat by the fire he's in with a chance I reckon 56 a servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight she looks closely you can see it can't you?

a bead of sweat the camera zooms in the attention on Peter this man was with him ah run for the hills the gig is up or is it?

57 he denied it woman I don't know him can you hear the inner monologue? just play it cool sit still what do these people know?

[17 : 41] it won't matter what I say 58 a little later someone else saw him and said you also are one of them oh no this is not good people were not supposed to notice it's getting tense he tries again man I am not a bit more emphatic back off would you?

why are you worrying about me? I'm just sitting here I don't know that guy from a bar of soap sounds like Satan is knocking 59 about an hour later another asserted certainly this fellow was with him for he is a Galilean for a third time someone noticed the long gap hasn't let Peter off he was with him just look at him a Galilean obviously the proof is in the pudding surely now it's over Peter but no he digs in 60 man I don't know what you're talking about it's a strong assertion so Peter gives a strong response I don't know what you're talking about why are you bothering me?

isn't he the one on trial? and it's the final nail in the coffin isn't it? and before he could dig any more holes the rooster crows 61 the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken before the rooster crows today you will disown me three times oh yeah Jesus the guy he doesn't know has been there all along could he hear that?

whether he could or not the memory of last night's conversation plus the implications of his comments have come back like an arrow in the heart Jesus had told him the sifting of Satan was coming and he was flippant can you even imagine the crushing emotional weight as this realisation hits him the denial the rooster the look from Jesus remembering the warning and his own response you know that feeling when you put your foot in it and no matter what you do you just can't take it back my trivial example of this is about spoiling a TV show for someone the second to last episode had come out and I was hanging out with friends I watched it with I asked if they'd seen it one said quite strongly no

I haven't seen it don't say anything did I hear yes did I compute no why did I respond I don't know still it was about 20 years ago I remember it like it was yesterday but I said so and so main character died and he just looked at me and said what the heck with a bit more I hung my head in shame what could I do couldn't take it back Peter's situation is slightly more serious isn't it but what could he do 62 he went outside and wept bitterly throughout the passage we've seen reactions and responses in various situations only one person of all who've said they trust

[21 : 54] God including the priest sought God's help Jesus though he was ditched betrayed and deserted it's rare that we get insight into when temptations are coming at least like we do in these passages but the Bible gives some help doesn't it Paul says not more than we can deal with that's a comfort Peter says the devil is prowling looking to devour that's less of a comfort sometimes sometimes we help ourselves don't we we pray talk to people prepare our minds other times we don't help ourselves we put ourselves in risky situations with people by ourselves in relationships unintentionally and intentionally how do we live with the challenges of temptation with Satan prowling God's strength my weakness and we've heard in these passages quite definitive terms haven't we

Satan enters Satan sifts Jesus saying I prayed so your faith may not fail this can make us worry can't it but it mustn't make us ask questions or make conclusions that it isn't making such as if I give in to temptation I will be lost there are lessons from the disciples as they are with Jesus but we are not them we can learn from their mistakes but we are not doomed to their fate we live on the victory and redemption side of the cross Jesus has won forgiveness is given to all who ask and we who ask know that we can't live however we please yes of course because that means we haven't truly said no to sin and so now let me grab my whiteboard all good hugo forgot the o just then that was slightly awkward okay

I think the Christian life now is like a six that sounds a bit strange actually I'm going to draw it this way because that makes more sense it's like a six okay the upward stroke the upward stroke is seeking God so like upward here seeking God pursuing him in our actions our attitude our language our decisions and all sorts of things but Satan he's crafty isn't he he's always like Jeff Jeff what about this thing come and check this out come and look at this instead and then I come over here and fall and stumble and for some reason despite looking at

God's goodness I fall I desired something Satan offered you might be able to relate didn't have the resolute perseverance of my Lord it might have been for a moment it might have been for a while it might have been deliberate might have been planned it might have been thought out and when we reflect on that sometimes it can really dig deep it can really hurt can't it it feels like sometimes that we might fall from grace fall from God but we don't fall from God in a relationship with him because of temptation because of grace because of our relationship with him and because of forgiveness forgiveness because we're not here because of ourselves we're here because of him and so because of forgiveness and grace we can come back again and we begin fixing our eyes on

God again turning back to him in his grace and you know why this is a six instead of a zero there's no time frame there's no time frame in this six it's just an image but there's no time frame you know why it's not a zero because in my failure I learned a lesson as I grew again as we grow we get to know God better we get to know ourselves better we learn how Satan works all the while growing closer to God but you know what never putting off sin completely but learning again and the six continues leaning on God's strength submitting to God's will continually turning back to him resting in his grace

[27 : 46] I wonder if you know how you're being tempted at the moment I wonder if you know where you are on the six what might bring you from here to here from here to here to here to here being real with some sin that you're wrestling with at the moment recognising something in your heart and turning back to God resting in the grace and turning back to God what might bring you from here to here that is praying like Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray and leaning on him leaning on his strength instead of not leaning on it how about

I finish and to do that we'll think again about the example of Jesus who didn't flee from what was before him but turned to prayer so let me pray gracious heavenly father thank you for the salvation and forgiveness we have in our Lord thank you for the example of Peter who failed but who you still forgive in your grace and renewed whatever our temptation is at the moment would you give us your strength and help us so that we don't enter and fall may we fix our eyes on you and not fall asleep may we be real with our temptation and sin so that when the hour comes we might recognize it and lean on your strength may we not be overcome with temptation but if we do fall and fail help us to lean on your grace and come back to you remembering your love and goodness

Amen it take god those kids walk oholes rock go have inevitable come