

## THORNY PEOPLE

### God's Blessings or Corrections?

Matthew 26:36-46 (NLT) shares the account of Jesus as He prays in Gethsemane. Verse 41 spoke directly to my heart as temptation is a problem that all of us have to contend with in our lives. It reads, "Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak!"

As Jesus was going through one of the most difficult times in His life, a life that was coming to an end, He took them to an olive grove called Gethsemane and told the disciples to "Sit here while I go on ahead to pray." He took two of the disciples with him and began to be filled with anguish and deep distress. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and watch with me.

He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground praying, "MY Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine" Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you stay awake and watch with me even one hour? (41) Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak!"

Again he left them and prayed. He returned to them again and found them sleeping, for they just could not keep their eyes open. So he went back to pray a third time, saying the same things again. (The agony Jesus experienced was not occasioned by fear of physical death, but by the association of His death with sin. His holy nature shrank from the thought.) Then he came to the disciples and said, "Still sleeping? Still resting? Look, the time has come. I, the Son of Man, am betrayed into the hands of sinners. Up, let's be going. See, my betrayer is here!"

*Thorny people!* Jesus knew them. He encountered them daily. Judas betrayed Him and sold Him for 30 pieces of silver. The mother of James and John came to Jesus and spoke in behalf of her sons as to who was the greatest in the Kingdom. She was seeking high positions for them. Thomas doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead. Peter, James and John fell asleep in the garden when Jesus was praying. Peter denied knowing Him three times. Yet Jesus loved them and worked with them.

*Thorny People!* People who are as a "thorn in your side." We too interact with them daily. People in our lives can be a thorn—they bother us, bug us, and cause us hurt by the words they speak or the actions they take that affect our lives. The hurt is like a thorn. First the prick and then the hurt—the pain. Some wounds are very deep and some are slight, but each prick of the thorn "HURTS!"

The devil has his eyes on lazy people and he waits for just the right time to traps lazy people and tempts them to do wrong things. LAZY—we are not daily in the Word nor are we in right fellowship with the Lord. We listen and yield to our sin nature [selfishness] saying and doing things contrary to God's Word. We pray sporadically. We attend church when we feel like it. We do not bring our soul under submission to the Spirit of God within us and we sin. When we sin, we fall into the danger of becoming thorny people too.

Often the enemy lays subtle traps that ensnare us before we know what hit us, and sadly to say, at other times, we willfully engage in sinful activities in full knowledge of what we are doing—willful sin! Hence, God's warning in verse 41, "Stay awake and pray that you will not be tempted. Your spirit wants to do what is right. But your body is weak."

Yet, Jesus still loves us, forgives us and continues to work with us. He shows us kindness and patience. He sends people into our life to help us see the error of our ways. He sends encouragers, intercessors, people who walk in the gift of love and compassion to speak to our heart and alert us to see the plans of darkness that are contrary to His plans. And as the sheep who have strayed, He is faithful tries to "Woo" us back into the fold—our place of blessings and safety.

*May your daily prayer be, "Father, please help me to be patient, loving, and kind to the thorny people in my life. May I listen and receive the Holy Spirit's teaching that I might walk in wisdom, love and understanding of those my life touches, and may I not become a thorn in the side of others in Jesus' name. Amen!"*