

# According To Plan

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Lord, we pray that you will open your word to our hearts and our hearts to your word. Amen. Good morning everybody. We continue in our series in the Gospel of Luke, based on the passage David Ellis read for us just a little while back.
- It's a longish reading but there is a simple and practical outline to it. The passage begins with Jesus praying and the passage ends with Jesus prevailing under trial.
- After Jesus' prayer we see the disciples sleeping and we see the disciples failing under their trial.
- So at the extremities we have Jesus praying on the one hand, prevailing on the other and in between that we see the disciples failing to pray, in fact sleeping, and then failing under the tests that they faced.
- So at its simplest, Luke's message is pray and don't sleep. I could stop there.
- [ 1 : 2 5 ] Let me ask three questions of Luke. The first is, under which circumstances did the disciples fail?
- Secondly, how was it that Jesus did prevail? And thirdly, I guess, and most importantly, is how can we prevail?
- So the first, what were the circumstances under which the disciples failed? Well, the circumstances revealed their inner flaws.
- My pronunciation may be a trick here. F-L-A-W. Flaw. Or weakness. It's a word that is used by the apostles Paul and Peter elsewhere as passions.
- Some inner fault line that, given the circumstances, will be tragically revealed. In Judas' case, it was greed.
- [ 2 : 3 1 ] We know that he was the treasurer of the group and a serial thief. And so his inner flaw, F-L-A-W, is greed.
- Quick and easy money. But there's more, of course, in that when the authorities did turn up, he identifies Jesus by a kiss.
- So to the weakness of greed, we might add, shall we say, the sin of hypocrisy. The Judas kiss.
- Then there is an unnamed disciple who hot-headedly strikes a servant of the high priest. Uncontrolled anger. Another flaw.
- Luke doesn't identify the offender. Though he does add the detail about him being healed. And Luke, being a physician, that might have been a detail that he might have noticed.
- [ 3 : 3 3 ] Actually, John's Gospel says it was Peter. Well, Peter's other flaw, F-L-A-W, was his moral cowardice.
- His weakness when he was with the soldiers and the attendants in the courtyard of the high priest. When he was together with them.

He behaved like them. He talked like them. He denied like them. Three times in his case. And that poses the question, What am I like when I am not with fellow Christians but am with them?

Whoever the them might be. Do I talk like them? Do I behave like them? Do I, in effect, deny Christ like them?

What am I like when I am with them? Well, the disciples did not pray but slept.

[ 4 : 44 ] And their own fatal flaws were revealed in the circumstances. They slept. They did not pray.

My second question for Luke is, How did Jesus prevail under his trial? Well, he did pray.

Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, but not my will. But yours be done. No impassive stoicism here.

No fatalism. There is real inner conflict. There is turmoil. There is stress. We can identify with Jesus. Take this cup from me, he asked.

Or pleaded. Cup which signified terrible suffering. Yet, not my will, but yours be done. That's what he prayed.

[ 5 : 42 ] Not my will, but yours be done. So under pressure, Jesus did not crumble. Beaten and mocked in pain and fear.

Are you the Christ? Are you the Son of God? Just say no. And the beatings will stop. We will release you.

No more pain, Jesus. Just go back to Nazareth. Just go back to carpentry. Just go back there and live out your days.

Say yes, Jesus, and there will be more beatings and crucifixion. The Romans had three ways of killing criminals.

Decapitation. Burning alive. And crucifixion. Crucifixion was the worst because it was the slowest. It often took days for a crucified person to die.

[ 6 : 47 ] And at night time when all was still, the wild animals, the wild dogs would come out and rip at the flesh of the crucified person since they were usually crucified close to the ground.

But Jesus prayed. But Jesus prayed. He did not sleep. He prayed. And he told them the truth. Son of God.

Messiah. Son of man. That is why he prevailed. Son of man. My third question for Luke. How can we pray so as not to fail under trial?

The simple answer is, don't forget to pray. Don't sleep. Pray. Pray. Pray that you do not enter your particular temptation.

Judas did not recognize and pray about his greed and his hypocrisy. He did not know himself. Peter did not recognize and pray about his bad temper and his potential weakness when he was with them.

[ 8 : 02 ] With them. With them. Not with Jesus, but with them. Johnny Cash, the singer and songwriter and redeemed and recovered alcoholic and drug abuser, sings a powerful song called The Beast in Me.

I need to recognize the beast in me and pray about the beast in me. Whatever it is. A special part of the Bible that is very helpful for us in all of this is written by Luke's friend Paul.

I'm thinking of Romans chapter 6. Where in Romans chapter 6, Paul urges his readers to recall their conversions.

Recall that time, Paul says, when you committed your life to Christ. That brought an end to an old life and the beginning of a new life.

Recall your conversion. For he says, at that time, he said, you were crucified with Christ. He's speaking metaphorically, of course. You were crucified with Christ.

[ 9 : 22 ] You were buried with Christ in his burial. And you were raised alive in his resurrection. You were given the Holy Spirit at that particular time.

And he says, now it is possible for you to walk in newness of life. Walking in newness of life. Recall your conversion, says Paul.

Don't go back to the old life. Continue to live out the power of conversion through being united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

And in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that you walk in newness of life. Recall your conversion. And in the same passage in Romans chapter 6, Paul speaks about our various members.

Our hands, our feet, our bodies, our eyes, our memories, our imaginations. And he says, dedicate them to God as an instrument of righteousness.

[ 10 : 25 ] Submit, yield yourself bit by bit to God. Or as the old hymn says, take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee.

I need to love Jesus more than my sins. I need to have a greater love and an understanding that because he did all this for me and in my place, how great is his love for me.

So do I reciprocate that love by loving him more than my sins. So I'm not to be a Sunday only Christian, but a 365 day a year Christian.

When day by day I am recalling my conversion and walking in newness of life and day by day I'm dedicating all the bits that make up me to God.

And then to a significant degree I will prevail. There will be moments of failure to be sure.

[ 11 : 35 ] But God in his mercy picks us up, forgives us, dusts us off, turns us around and sets us on our feet to start over again. But I want to say that this prevailing isn't merely in regard to our besetting sins, important as that is.

The real burden of this passage is that Christ prevailed against the pressure that was upon him by not denying who he was. But by confessing the truth of who he was, Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man.

So they kept on peppering him with a question, who are you? And he said, Messiah, Son of God, Son of Man. They said, no, you're a liar, and crucified him.

These same disciples who failed on this particular night in the days to come preached Jesus in terms of who Jesus himself said he was.

The Messiah, Son of Man. And just as the unbelieving authorities crucified him, so they killed them.

[ 12 : 59 ] And throughout the 2,000 years since that time, the true church has always said that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And the unbelieving society, particularly in our world today, now says, no, he isn't.

And reviles us. Crucified him. Killed the disciples. Reviles us.

Jesus is the great rock around which the stream of humanity divides. Jesus says, I am. The New Testament says he is.

And we, the true church, say he is. Chief priest then, and the world now says, no, he isn't. But the witness of the apostle says, yes, he is.

And so we are coming down the river. And we see the rock, Christ, ahead of us. We see the stream dividing around him, one side and the other. But do we join the chief priests, the secularists, and yes, the liberal church, and say, no, he isn't.

[ 14 : 11 ] Or do we join Jesus, do we join Jesus and the apostles and say, yes, yes, yes, he is.

Jesus knew who he was. He prayed in obedience to the Father, your will be done. He confessed to the torturers who he was.

And he went to the cross for us instead of us. So our passage is a contrast between Jesus and the disciples.

He prayed and God brought him through unblemished and pure. And he slept, and one by one they failed, succumbing to their passions, their inner flaws.

Judas betrayed him, greed and hypocrisy. Peter denied him moral cowardice, caring too much what others think when he was with them.

[ 15 : 23 ] We do well to identify our inner flaws. We do well to recognise the situations where the pressure to fail is great.

We do well not to sleep, but to watch and pray. Learn from Jesus, the man who prayed. And be warned by the disciples who slept.

Amen. Please bow or kneel for prayer. Amen. Father God, we praise you that you sent your son Jesus Christ to die for us.

Thank you for the depths of your love. And thank you for Jesus' obedience to you. We pray that our love to others might reflect yours to us.

We repent of the many times we have not loved others as you love us. May our obedience to you reflect that of Jesus.

[ 16 : 42 ] May our obedience to you reflect that of Jesus. Not my will, but yours be done. Lord, our broken world yearns for your return.

Many suffer much violence and hardship and do not know you. We pray that you would bless those who suffer with peace and faith.

We pray for those in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea, the Congo and elsewhere. Please heal the sick, Lord.

Give rest to the weary. And bless all with faith. We also pray for those not facing direct persecution. May you bless them with faith.

We pray for the many missionaries serving you all over the world. Bless them with health and strong faith. And please bless their work, Lord, through turning more people to you.

[ 17 : 50 ] Lord, we bring world leaders before you. As they make influential decisions, may you bless them with humility, love and faith. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Lord, we thank you for blessing us with a beautiful city. Your creation in Vancouver indeed points toward your sovereignty. Yet many do not know you, and many still suffer.

We pray for those whom we know who do not know you. Please, Lord, work in their hearts. Bless us with the right words to say to them. And please give us an opportunity to share your good news with them.

We repent of the many times when we have chosen not to share your good news with others. Please give us the right words, Lord. We also pray for those that we do not know.

Please soften hard hearts. We further bring before you the unemployed and homeless. Please provide work and shelter for these people, Father God. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

[ 19 : 00 ] Lord, we bring before you our church. Thank you for establishing this community of believers at St. John's. We praise you for the great work that you have done here. Bless us, Lord, with energy and love to serve.

We bring the legal case before you. Thank you for blessing us with the resources to use these facilities to serve your kingdom. And may you bless the judge with wisdom as he makes his decision.

We also thank you for our leadership team. We praise you for David, Dan, Jim, and many, many others. Please bless them with good health and strong faith.

We also pray for our missionaries, Lord. Lord, specifically today, Paul Ratsoy at Lighthouse Ministries, Marion Maxwell at Genesis House, and Dan and Fran Gow at Seeds of Hope.

Please, Lord, bless these ministries. May many hearts turn to you. And, Lord, we pray for those who need special care at this time. Don, Harold, Rowena, Ron, George, Ben and Nancy, Gordon, and the family of Velva Wells who died on Friday night.

[ 20 : 14 ] And in a moment of silence, we pray for those known only to us. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Finally, Lord, we bring ourselves before you. Often we are led astray by false idols and values. Please forgive us, Father. As your son Jesus told the apostles to pray, may we not enter into temptation.

May we not sleep. Please bless us with joyful, humble, serving, and obedient hearts. Bless us with perseverance to endure tribulation, love to encourage others, and faith to cling deeply to you.

And may you bless our work with your Holy Spirit, Lord. We pray these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, and for his glory. Amen.