

Unshakeable Faith Week Four

Most of us naturally protect our physical property and the people in our care. We lock doors, screen babysitters, change the batteries in the smoke detectors and back up important files on our computers.

Think for a moment about some of the precautions you take.

Are you that diligent about protecting yourself from temptation?

The trials of life can tempt us to be less than completely submitted and obedient to God. Sometimes we don't trust Him enough to follow Him down a hard path. Sometimes we try to fix our problems the world's way instead of depending on God. Often we give up on God too quickly and hastily act in our own strength.

Unshakeable Faith Trait Four:

Determined to Stay Alert and Guard Against Temptation

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He warned Peter and the other disciples about the upcoming trial. Jesus declared that all of them would run away and Peter would deny Him three times before the night was over. (See Mark 14:27-31.) Of course our friend Peter emphatically insisted, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (verse 31). But once again, Peter had to learn a lesson through the pain of failure.

Read Mark 14:32-41. What did Jesus ask Peter, James, and John to do? (Note verses 34 and 38.)

Here's a definition for the Greek word translated as "watch" from *The Complete Word Study New Testament* by Spiros Zodhiates:

To rouse, to watch, to refrain from sleep; to be mindful of threatening dangers which, with conscious earnestness and an alert mind, keeps one from all drowsiness and all slackening in the energy of faith and conduct.

Based on the definition above, how could “watching” combined with prayer help them – and us – to withstand temptation?

Jesus told the inner three that “the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” Peter really did plan to stand by Jesus even if it meant death. But when the testing came, Peter ran. When things got tough, Peter denied His Lord. So often we want to stand firm, we want to obey to God, but when tough times come all our bold plans fall apart. *Have you ever experienced that?*

Peter may have fallen to temptation, but he learned from his failure. In turn, he wanted others to learn from his experience and not make the same mistakes.

Read 1 Peter 5:6-9. Peter made four exhortations or “strong, urgent recommendations.” Each verse begins with one. List them below.

Peter knew from experience that pride comes before a fall! He did not want others to learn the hard way. He also wanted to remind his readers that God cared for them. Whether we are facing an illness, material need, a strained relationship, or Christian persecution, God knows and cares.

What might we be tempted to do if we doubt God’s loving concern for us?

In the NIV, the first part of 1 Peter 5:8 reads “*Be self-controlled and alert.*” That word *alert* is the very same Greek word translated as the word *watch* in Mark 14. Jesus’ warning to Peter did have an impact!

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

Paul used the Israelites’ disobedience to teach Christians a vital truth: God expects obedience and disobedience brings consequences. Although God miraculously brought them out of Egypt, guided them, and provided for them they still went their own way when things got difficult. Just like Peter! Peter “thought he was standing firm,” but instead he fell (1 Corinthians 10:12). He failed to pray for God’s direction and help. He failed to watch out for Satan and his schemes.

What wonderful promise do you see in 1 Corinthians 10:13?

You and I do not have to yield to temptation. God always provides a way for us to choose obedience. We don't sin by enduring trials and facing temptation, but we do sin when we reject God's way and choose our own.

Group discussion: What decisions lay before you today? Where are you weak and susceptible to temptation? What are some specific ways you can guard yourself against these weaknesses?