

“Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered; blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin.” (Romans 4:7-8)

Here is an old prayer for the days of the week after the First Sunday in Lent: **Grant O Lord that when we are tempted, we may resist the devil; that when we are worried, we may cast all our care on you; that when we are weary, we may seek your rest; and in all things that we may live this day to your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

This prayer reminds us how Jesus resisted the devil when he was tempted in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11). It also reminds us of the questions asked in baptism: “Do you renounce the devil and all his empty promises and all his evil works?” That is one of the reasons we get baptized.

Three things are linked together in the prayer: temptation, worry, and weariness. I have noticed that I worry more when I am tired, and that I get more tired when I worry! And when I am worried and tired—I do not resist temptation very well....

There is a story in Genesis 16:1-6 about how temptation, worry, and weariness affected Abraham and Sarah. Their worries about having a child led them into one temptation, and their weariness from bearing the burden of that sin led them into another sin. We might expect God to punish them, but instead the focus shifts to the other victim in the temptation, Sarah’s maid Hagar (Genesis 16:7-15). She doesn’t get punished either—God sends an angel to save her and the Lord even speaks to her! This story shows us that God’s grace breaks the temptation-worry-weariness cycle. We can ask for God’s help with our worries even though we have sinned, and we can count on God for safety and peace when we are weary. Sarah and Abraham and Hagar were blessed because God did not keep track of their sins, and so are we!

The verses quoted from Psalm 32 found in Romans 4:7-8 connect this blessing to faith in Jesus. The author of Romans, Paul the Apostle, helps us imagine faith in Jesus as a big blanket that covers our sins. I hope that whenever we pray, we can imagine ourselves covered in a big blanket of God’s grace and love through Jesus Christ. I hope you feel that way not only when you pray to thank God, but also when you pray to ask God for forgiveness. Fridays in Lent are especially good for wrapping up in the blanket of God’s grace, because Jesus died on a Friday! If you take extra time to pray on Fridays in Lent, the prayer above is a good start.