

“” (Mark 14:26–42)¹

Our story begins right after the disciple's have celebrated the first Lord's Supper. Jesus turns to his closest followers and makes a sober prediction: "You will all fall away." By using the strong Greek word for "fall away," Jesus essentially says: You will all stumble and fall flat on your faces

Jesus wants his disciples to understand that they can't handle what's ahead by themselves. They must let go and seek God for help in the coming hours. Rather than listen to Jesus, Peter beats his chest with much bravado and trumpets,

After leaving the Mount of Olives, Jesus and His disciples arrive at Gethsemane. Luke and John tell us that Gethsemane was a garden where Jesus and His disciples often met (Luke 22:39; John 18:1-2). The word **“Gethsemane”** means, “oil press”; that is a press for squeezing oil out of olives. In this location, Jesus’ life was nearly squeezed out of Him.² With the burden of the cross before Him, Jesus **“took”** Peter, James and John deeper into the garden (14:33; cf. Matt 26:38).³ Jesus does not take His inner three disciples along because He needed them! He took them along because they needed it.⁴ Jesus wanted them to be convicted of their foolish smugness and feelings of invincibility!

In 14:33, Mark records that Jesus began to feel **“distressed”**⁵ and **“troubled.”**⁶ These are strong terms. Jesus sees the test that is in front of Him. He feels Judas betrayal, the Jewish priests hatred, His own disciples’ disloyalty, the spiritual attack of Satan, the weight of the sins of the entire world for all time, and most of all, the Father’s imminent rejection of Him! What Mark is saying is: this burden is literally killing Jesus; it’s crushing the life out of Him!

Jesus plainly tells His disciples, **“My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch” (14:34)**. The prospect of bearing God’s wrath for the world’s sins and experiencing separation from His Father grieved Jesus deeply.⁷ The magnitude of Christ’s sorrow was enough to kill him. It was enough to cause the capillaries in his body to dilate and burst (Luke 22:43-44). This was much more than any martyr has ever had to endure. Yet, we must be reminded that Jesus was not afraid to die. Countless martyrs have faced death courageously. Jesus was not overwhelmed by the painful death by crucifixion. Not at all. He was overwhelmed by the magnitude of man’s sin. He was to become the sin bearer for the entire world (2 Cor 5:21).

What an incredible self-disclosure of Christ to his disciples. This gives great insight into the humanity of Christ. He understood the deepest level of emotional depression. Whatever you’re going through today, Jesus understands. You’re not alone. Jesus Himself feels your pain and empathizes with you.

After sharing His grief with His disciples Jesus **“went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour⁸ might pass Him by. And He was saying, ‘Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will’” (14:35-36)**. Even amidst great emotional torment, Jesus realized He had to be alone with His Father. He could have clung to the disciples but instead He knew He had to be away from them. This should remind us that without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life. When do you need to be the most spiritual? When your life is being attacked!

This is Mark’s third mention of Jesus praying (cf. 1:35; 6:46). In each instance Jesus affirmed His commitment to the Father’s will that Satan was constantly testing. When Jesus was tempted or attacked, He didn’t work harder and pray less, He worked less and prayed harder. This is a timeless principle for us. It’s been well said, “When we work, we work, when we pray God works.” The greater the pressure, the more intense the praying. The more out of control things become, the more critical it is to talk to God

for help, wisdom, strength. Pray hard when you find it hard to pray.

In His prayer, Jesus addresses His Father as “**Abba**” (“Daddy”). The Jews did not address God as “Abba” because they considered such intimacy disrespectful. Jesus uses the word because as the Son of God, He was on intimate terms with the Father.⁹ Jesus expresses faith in God with whom all things consistent with His nature are possible (cf. 9:23). Remember Jesus is a man. He does not have complete knowledge of everything that there is to be known. There might be a way of saving the world that He does not know about. If there is a way of avoiding the cross He would like to avoid it.

In the OT, the “**cup**” is a powerful picture of the wrath and judgment of God.¹⁰ In Mark, the cup is used figuratively of God’s judgment in the cross (cf. 10:38-39). The cup Jesus is referring to is the cup of God’s wrath that lies in store for Him. Again, to the Son of God the physical pain paled in significance to the spiritual agony caused by God’s fury vented against all the sins of mankind, which the Son would take upon Himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God.

Jesus eventually returned to the disciples and found them sleeping. He then spoke to Peter, “**Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?**” (14:37). Perhaps Jesus spoke specifically to Peter because Peter had boasted that he would never deny Jesus (14:29, 31). Jesus’ use of the name “**Simon,**” Peter’s original name (1:16) may imply his natural weakness. Peter was not living up to the meaning of his new name; he was not behaving as a rock (3:16). Peter was ready to resist any attack, except the attack of the *Sandman*.

Remarkable as it may seem, even for today’s busy-busy Christian, no valid excuse exists for not being a person of daily private prayer. In fact, I would argue, the right way to be a Christian is to pray 15 minutes a day. One can easily amend the words with which Jesus rebuked the disciples at Gethsemane: “Could you not spare a quarter hour with me?”

God, please find a Plan B to save the world. Jesus asks directly, clearly, and boldly for what he needs and wants.

14:38 “**Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.**” Jesus now addresses all three disciples. He commands them to “**Keep watching¹¹ and praying.**”¹² These activities are necessary to overcome temptation. The spirit refers to the Holy Spirit while the “**flesh**” is a reference to the physical body. Peter could not stand guard one hour. Imagine the pain this caused Jesus. He was not surprised by their reaction. He had predicted their abandonment. Yet, here they were, asleep during the greatest moment in all of human history! Even though Jesus had warned them repeatedly to be alert two nights before (13:24-27), and had warned them of his betrayal and death, as well as their own desertion...yet even still they felt no need to be alert, much less to seek God’s strength and protection!

In 14:39-40, Mark writes, “**Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.**” Jesus returned from the disciples who gave Him no support to the Father who sustained Him. The disciples probably did not have anything to say to Jesus because they felt ashamed. They had boasted great spiritual strength, but they were demonstrating great spiritual weakness. There seems to be an inverse relationship between how self-confident we feel and how much we pray.

Peter and John are no doubt exhausted from their Passover prep. But more importantly, they have chosen to close their eyes spiritually. They could have had 40 cups of coffee (instead of four glasses of wine for Passover) and still not stayed awake.¹³ Proper rest, sleep, and nutrition can go a long way toward spiritual living.

Our passage closes with Jesus approaching the disciples for the third time.¹⁴ He asks, “**Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!**” (14:41-42). Mark alone recorded that Jesus made three separate forays into the depths of the garden to pray. Jesus’ perseverance in prayer demonstrated the extent of His dependence on the Father. Jesus’ question convicted the disciples again. He probably intended His words as an ironic command rather than as a question or simply to express surprise (cf. Matt 26:45). The phrase “**It is enough**”¹⁵ refers to the disciples’ sleepiness. Jesus meant the disciples had had enough sleep and it was time to wake up. The opportunity to watch and pray is over. They must now prepare for Christ’s betrayal.

“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.³⁸ Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”³⁹ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”⁴⁰ And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour?⁴¹ “Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”⁴² He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.”⁴³ Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.⁴⁴ And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.⁴⁵ Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.⁴⁶ “Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

<http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/jesus-in-the-garden-james-galbraith-sermon-on-easter-good-friday-36147.asp>

Wilkins, Michael J. “Gethsemane: Jesus’ Agonizing Prayers (26:36 - 46)” In *NIV Application Commentary, New Testament: Matthew*. By Michael J. Wilkins, 840. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 2004.

which most likely means “oil-press.”

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Jesus does not ask them to pray but to watch. As he grievously anticipates his looming death, his overwhelming sorrow reveals a heart broken almost to the point of death itself, because he knows that he will experience his Father’s forsakenness (cf. [27:46](#)). This reveals the depth of Jesus’ human relationships he feels is necessary to sustain him in his time of greatest need. It may be difficult to grasp that the Son of God had such needs, but to do so gives us a more adequate understanding of his incarnation.

Notes

¹ Cf. Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46; John 18:1.

² This incident contrasts Jesus' humility and dependence on the Father with Peter's self-confidence. It is a remarkable revelation of the humanity of Jesus.

³ Cf. 5:37; 9:2; 13:2 (with the addition of Andrew).

⁴ Jesus apparently took His inner circle of disciples with Him to teach them about suffering and to receive help from their intercession for Him. The other disciples were to pray as well (Luke 22:40).

⁵ Gk. *ekthambeisthai*, cf. 9:15; 16:5-6.

⁶ Gk. *ademonein*, cf. Matt 26:37; Phil 2:26.

⁷ Gk. *perilupos*, cf. 6:26.

⁸ Jesus evidently prayed for the better part of an hour (14:37) though Mark only recorded the essence of His request (cf. Heb 5:7). Jesus' submission to His Father here recalls Genesis 22:7 where Isaac addressed his father Abraham in a very similar situation quite near this place.

⁹ Cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6.

¹⁰ Cf. Psa 75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15.

¹¹ Gk. *gregoreite*, cf. 13:34, 35, 37.

¹² Gk. *proseuchesthe*, the general word for prayer (cf. 6:46; 11:24-25; 12:40; 13:18; 14:32, 35, 38-39).

¹³ David E. Garland, *Mark: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1996), 542.

¹⁴ One of the most commonly recognized patterns of narration in Mark is the threefold repetition of similar actions and events (e.g., at Gethsemane, Jesus returns from prayer three times to find the disciples sleeping; Peter denies Jesus three times; Pilate asks the crowd three leading questions, each of which is rejected; and the narrator recounts events of the crucifixion at three, three-hour intervals: 9:00, 12:00, and 3:00). Here, this threefold pattern of narration underscores the definitive failure of the disciples.

¹⁵ Cranfield lists eight different interpretations. C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Great Britain: Cambridge, 1974), 435-36.