



Midnight in the Garden

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Mark 14:32-42

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³² And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." ³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

(Pastor Prays)

In his autobiography entitled *Up from Slavery*, Booker T. Washington wrote that the most trying ordeal he ever had as a slave was when he was forced to wear something called a flax. It was Slave clothing made of the coarsest material. It was made of cheap fibers, which were very rough and coarser than steel wool. Booker T. Washington said that I can scarcely imagine any

torture worse than that, except maybe having a tooth pulled. When you put on the flax shirt for the very first time, it's like 10,000 thorn bushes going into your flesh. Washington said, my brother, John, performed one of the most generous acts that I've ever heard of one slave relative performing for another. Washington said that on several occasions when I was being forced to take on a new flax shirt, my brother John agreed to put my shirt on and wear it until it was soft enough that it didn't injure me. In the same way, in the deep mysteries of this passage, we find the story of Jesus, our elder brother, putting on the garment that is meant for us.

Think with me of the context. This is the last week of the earthly life of Jesus. We've already had the Passover supper, and on Thursday, they were in Jerusalem and the walled city, and after the Passover supper, Judas was gone. He'll be back, but he's gone. The 11 disciples, with Jesus, leave Jerusalem and come down the hill and up to the Mount of Olives. The sun has already gone down. We are now approaching midnight when they get to the garden. And Mark takes us there. Mark takes us inside the garden and tells us this story so that we might know what Jesus did. I'm convinced that...

Knowing What He Did Helps Us Know How to Live.

What's important today is right here in the garden of Gethsemane. Knowing what he did will help you know how to live. Let's go through the passages like we've been doing. Let's just start in verse 32, walk through it, and make it a little bit like a Bible study. I'm going to be kind of a tour guide. I'm going to walk through and point out a couple of things that you ought to consider. Join me there in verse 32. ³² *And they went to a place called Gethsemane.* The very word Gethsemane probably means something like olive press or oil press. It would be a symbol of how Jesus is going to be pressed in the garden. It's probably owned by a wealthy follower of Jesus. Maybe that wealthy follower let Jesus and his disciples borrow it. They've been there from time to time. John tells us that Judas knows where it is. They go there to pray. It's probably a walled garden with olive trees. He has his 11 disciples with him, and he says to them in verse 32, *Sit here while I pray.*" In verse 33, Jesus takes his closest friends. It's good to have a group of friends. Peter, James, and John have been with Jesus through so much. They were there when they saw Jesus at the most spectacular event of the earthly life, the Transfiguration. Now, those three guys are with him when he goes through the worst thing he's ever been through. They've never seen him like this. Mark tells us in verse 33 that he began to be greatly

distressed. Greatly distressed, that's an odd descriptor. We don't find that anywhere else in the entire Bible. Talking about Jesus to be greatly distressed means to be shocked, to be horrified, or even surprised. He's peering over into the cup that he's supposed to drink. This is not him dreading the cross. This is not him afraid to die. There were lots of martyrs who marched off to their deaths singing hymns. There are a lot of brave men and women that have done that. This is not about him dying on the cross. This is him understanding and seeing for the first time what's in that cup. He looks over the rim of it, and Mark tells us he wouldn't only be distressed but also he's troubled. That word carries with it the idea of anxiety. It's something beyond worry. If you ever struggle with anxiety, go to this passage, to the Garden of Gethsemane. It won't take the anxiety away, but what it will do is let you see the sting of anxiety that is carried by Jesus. He's feeling that. So he's horrified. He's anxious. In verse 34, he says, ³⁴ *And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."* It's like he says: I'm drowning in sorrow. In fact, this is so bad that his soul is very sorrowful, even to death. I don't think this is hyperbole. I don't think this is a metaphor. I think this is actually what was going on. Luke tells us that he sweat drops of blood. So he says to his friends, stay here with me, guys remain here and watch. Just stay here. In verse 35, the burden is so great that this is not Jesus just kneeling down. This is not him standing with his hands open and praying. The text says that he went a little further, and he fell to the ground. This is dirt under his fingernails, his face in the dirt. Jesus is on the ground.

Suppose there's any other way. I mean, isn't there any other way? I know that all things are possible with you so if there's any other way, could this hour pass? Here's the humanity. Why did Jesus have to live and go through all of this? This is for us, and this is you.

So Jesus calls out in verse 36 to God. He speaks to God in a way that Jewish people would not speak to God. The scribes wouldn't even write the name of God, much less say the name of God. And here is Jesus saying Abba, Father. It's like a little girl learning to ride a bicycle, and the faster she goes, the better it is, and she gets up to a certain speed and starts to wobble and falls off the bike. She's all skinned up, so she calls out to her dad. It feels like Jesus is calling to his Father, help me. I don't want to drink this cup. If I drink this cup, there is sin, foulness, and wrath. Please, Father. You could do this. You could take this away.

Jesus gathers himself between verses 36 and 37. He gets up off the ground and returns to the disciples. ³⁷ *And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?"* See here that Jesus doesn't call him Peter. Peter means Rock. Jesus says he's the Rock that his church will be built on, but here Jesus calls him Simon, and then there's a lesson in verse 38. I think it's remarkable that Jesus taught a lesson during his darkest hour. The lesson is ³⁸ *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

In verse 39, Jesus goes away a second time, and he's praying the same thing, and in verse 40, he comes again and finds them sleeping. It's midnight. It's been a long day. They can't keep their eyes open. They didn't know what to say and didn't have any excuses. Finally, in verse 41, Jesus comes a third time. Maybe it was three times because Peter's going to deny him three times. I don't know. ⁴¹ *And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.* There's a little phrase in the middle of this. It is enough. You see that phrase. I would circle it. That is an accounting term. It means that whatever debt needed to be settled has been settled. It's been paid. It is enough. There is another phrase there. The time has come. Remember, in the Gospel of John, we would hear Jesus say my hour has not yet come. Remember, his mother at the wedding had him do something with the wine, and he said my hour has not yet come. When they tried to kill him he said, the hour is not yet come. And now the predetermined, predestined time is here. In verses 41 and 42, you can hear the footsteps. You can hear them outside of the wall. There's a mob on the way. ⁴² *Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."*

From the text, I'm going to give you a couple of things to show us what we need. What do we need? Here's the first one. #1.

We Need Friends

You don't get saved and then go off and live like a monk out in the desert. That's not good for you. There is a reason we're together as a church, a congregation of brothers and sisters in Christ that are not held together by anything other than the Gospel of Jesus. We find Jesus Christ himself walking off in verses 32 and 33 with his closest friends. He's going to go through

the hardest time of his life and those guys, even if they were sleeping. What do we need in our friends? We need our friends, to be honest. Be careful with the whole honesty thing. A lot of you will say, I just like to speak my mind. I'm just going to be honest with you, and then your honesty is like a sledgehammer. You might want to wrap that sledgehammer in a blanket or something. Just wrap it up and be nicer, and then you can have some redemptive honesty.

Not only that, but we also need people who will stay with us when we walk through something. You need brothers and sisters in Christ who care for you, who will support you, and pray with you. You need friends who will pray for you and think of you. Think of your friends right now. Think of the people that you would call friends. Here are some questions you need to ask yourself about your friends. Do your friends cause you to sin? Are you more likely to sin with your friends? Would your friends keep you from worship or affect your worship? Do the people you call friends enable you to sin, make it easier for you to sin, or excuse your sin? Do the people you call friends make you want to honor Christ more? Are you growing in holiness because of your friends? Or are you making any effort to actually be that kind of Christian friend? One of the things you notice when you fly over this passage and look down at it, is that we actually do need friends. That's a good place to start. Let's take another step. Here's the second point. #2.

We need to hate sin more

That's what this is about. When you get there and look at it, what he's dealing with in verses 33-36 is that we need to hate our sin more. Look at the words. ³³ *And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.* The text says that he was greatly distressed. You see, the word distressed means to be alarmed, to be amazed, and to be shocked. This is not exactly surprising, but almost surprised. We understand that Jesus is sovereign, right? And that he is God, but he also is man, and as a human, he looks over into this cup, and he can't believe what he sees. The next word is troubled. All of you deal with some sort of pain, depression, or anxiety. I want you to go to the Garden of Gethsemane and see Jesus feeling that. This is the worst pain he has ever been in. This is all because Jesus will take on sin, he will drink what's in that cup, and he will be the object of God's wrath. God, the Father, will turn away from him.

In the next verse, he is sorrowful. ³⁴ *And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."* He's deeply grieved, and he's surrounded by sorrow. He is in an ocean of sorrow, drowning in that sorrow. He takes a breath, and he pulls in sorrow. For all of you that hurt, go here to the garden and see him taking the sting of it. I'm not saying that you won't be sorrowful. I'm saying that it won't kill you because it killed him. You go there and look and see. He wore the garment and took the pain of it. The wave of anguish is so intense that it almost kills him. Luke tells us in Luke 22 that whatever was going on physiologically under his skin, he started to bleed. His pulse rate and his blood pressure had gone up. I think that he was being literal here when he said, I am so sad I think I'm going to die. Verse 35 says it overcomes him, and he fell to the ground. He was carrying this massive weight; this burden he was carrying was the cup. You see, he had looked over into the cup, and there's all your sin. It's all the foulness, the terrible thoughts, the things we've done, said, and committed. He sees all the wrath of God that will fall on those under his judgment. There's the Father, turning away. He saw that, and it just about killed him in the garden. He drank the cup for us.

Here's the gospel. You and I stand condemned under the wrath of God, but Jesus, the perfect one, took the cup that was prepared for us. He drank it and suffered under the judgment of God in our place. God raised him from the dead. And if you believe today that if you trust that Jesus and Jesus alone, his life, death, and resurrection, he did that for you, you will be saved.

Look, we do need friends. We need Christian friends. There's no doubt about it. But we need to hate sin more than we do. Let's keep looking at the garden and let me give you another point.
#3.

We need to rethink how we pray

So, let's use Jesus as a model of prayer. We've seen him pray three times in the Gospel of Mark. This is the most intense time for him to pray. What do we learn from Jesus about how to pray? I'll just give you a couple of words. Can you use them as sub-points? The first one is we learn persistence. Keep going back. In verse 36, he prayed; in verse 39, he prayed a second time. Then, in verse 31, he went back a third time, and he kept asking. And it's a terrible prayer. It's a gut-wrenching prayer. It's a sorrowful prayer, and he kept asking. Some of you have people

you're praying for but you haven't seen the change. You keep going back. Maybe God just brought you here today for this, for you to hear me say to keep praying. Persistence.

Let me give you another word. It's the word reticence. After I wrote this, I thought that's not very good, so let's use the word humility. So write that one down: humility. What you have here is this lack of presuming. Notice what it says in verse 35. ³⁵ *And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.* He's not demanding. He's not saying he deserved anything. What about me? God, why would you do this? There's none of that.

There is another word that I would just call your attention to. It's the word closeness. Notice what he says to God in verse 36. ³⁶ *And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.* Before that time, no Jew would ever say that or would even write the name of God. Now Jesus comes, he will take the wrath of God for us, and he will make it so that, in Jesus, you can be a son or a daughter of God. You can go to God and know that you are speaking to a father that loves you. There's a closeness here.

The next word will be belief. Notice what Jesus says: all things are possible for you. It's good for you just to remember that God can do anything. God can do all things that you ask him to do. It's good to remember. Now, he may not answer your prayer the way you want him to. There is an acknowledgment; I believe that God is able to do this. So, you keep praying like that, belief.

Let me give you another way to pray. Speak plainly. Just say it. Isn't that what Jesus does in verse 36? He just says, *Remove this cup from me.* Take it away. Put her name in there and just say, God, she is on a path to hell, and if she died today, she's going to hell. Please save her. God, this disease has got a hold of me. I don't want to die right here. Please save me. Just say it. God may or may not. Jesus asked directly.

This one is at the very end. This is the hardest. It is a radical submission. Look what he says in verse 36. It's a radical submission. ³⁶ *And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.* Here's the submission. *Yet not what I will, but what you will."* Can you say that? What's most important here is that God the Father is glorified. How will God be glorified in what you're going through? God is doing 10 billion things right now, and you don't

know any of them. There's no telling what God is doing, and it's good for you to say, I submit my life. Whatever you deem is right—your will, Lord, your will. We need to rethink how we pray. We need to get the model from Jesus.

We need to fight temptation harder

You'll find it in verse 38, right in the middle of all this agony. It's amazing to me. Jesus shows this remarkable love for his followers. He comes back, and he teaches them a last lesson. It has two commands and two truths. ³⁸ *Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* So, the two commands are to watch and pray. Those are two commands. And then, *that you may not enter into temptation*. So you're not giving away the temptation. Then, the two truths are: *The spirit indeed is willing* - you want to do the right thing, *but the flesh is weak*. We keep falling to the temptation. We need to watch, to pay attention, and pray. Ask God to help. Why? Even though you want to do right, the spirit is willing, and the flesh is weak.

I don't want to be an addict. I don't want to take drugs. Why do you watch and pray? Even though you want to do right, the flesh is weak. He gives them a lesson on fighting temptation. How do you best fight temptation? The best thing I've heard was from John Piper. I've given it to you before, but let me give it to you again. John Piper said the best way to fight temptation is with the word anthem. It's an acronym, ANTHEM. Each letter stands for a word. A is for avoid. Do you want to fight temptation? The best way to do it is to avoid places where you know you will sin. Don't go to the places or be with the people that cause you to sin. Avoid. The next word is No. Just when you're tempted, say no. Just say it out loud. Say it quickly, even if you're in a room full of people, no. They might think you're insane, but you will not be tempted. Let me give the third word, it's turn. Piper says to turn the mind forcefully toward Christ as being superior. This passage is so moving. There's maybe not a more moving passage in the Bible. The H is for hold. Hold to the promise of Christ firmly in your mind. What did the writer of Hebrews say in Hebrews 12? Fix your eyes on Jesus. The E is for the word enjoy. Learn to enjoy a deeper satisfaction in Christ, to treasure Christ more than you treasure drugs, more than you treasure pornography. Learn to treasure Christ more. And the last word is move. It's practical. Piper says move. Move into some sort of useful activity away from idleness. Get up and go and do something. This is why your parents used to say, get out in the yard and play. Why? Because

idleness is the devil's workshop. Go do something. Go run around the block. That's the word ANTHEM. We need to fight temptation harder. Let me give you a fifth and a sixth point, and we'll be done. #5.

We need a deeper reverence for Christ

Just take the whole passage. Have you ever seen a more moving passage describing Jesus? I want to be careful that we don't fall off into some shallow, flippant approached church. I don't want to bog you down with formality. I don't want it to be cold. Look, brothers and sisters, think deeply about what Christ has done for us. Let's have a reverence so that we are joyful and not silly. Out of joy comes strength. The joy of the Lord is my strength. Let me close with this last one. #6.

We need to be brave

We need Christian courage. I don't know why it fell out of favor to talk about courage as a characteristic of a Christian. Bravery is noble and good and given to us by God. When you read verses 41 and 42, you can't help but see the courage of Jesus. He just struggled through what it's gonna take to drink the cup, and then he got up and dusted off his robe, walked to the disciples, and told them, as he heard the footsteps outside, I've paid it. It's enough. It's settled. It's done. Verse 41 says, the predestined time, the hour, is here. Outside these walls is the betrayer. Let's go face him.

Brothers and sisters, you must cultivate Christian courage in the days ahead. You will need the bravery to take what God has given us as truth and live it out. You need to claim that Christ and Christ alone will save you. Trust that God's good creation is a man and a woman, and the two are not mixed. They are joined together in one union that is given to us as marriage. God's truth is truth; stand there with it even when you are ridiculed, even when you are not accepted, even when the school denies you, even when the promotion is taken away, and even when you lose your job. We need to be brave. And the best way to do that is knowing what he did. You see, knowing what he did helps us know how to live.

(Pastor prays)