

Transcription of 17ID1944

Mark 14:32-42

"Agony At Gethsemane"

April 23, 2017

If you have a Bible with you, and I hope that you do, let's look at Mark 14. We're going to begin at verse 32 this morning and head down through verse 42.

As we continue with Mark through the ministry of Jesus, we are currently on Thursday night or, if you will, Friday morning on the Jewish calendar. And we finished last time, before Easter, the last supper. And so the Lord had ended the last supper by speaking to the boys about their weakness, about how the Shepherd was going to be smitten, and they were all going to forsake Him and flee from Him. And it didn't set well with any of them. Peter was the most outspoken, but no one really agreed. They all said, "No, no, no. I wouldn't leave You, and I would die for You if that was what was necessary." The Lord even spoke to Peter about the resurrection and to the boys said, "When I've risen, then I'll meet with you." And yet they weren't listening. And Peter was insistent, "I would never turn my back on You." But he would. In fact, before the morning, he would do it three different times.

So, they get up, and they leave dinner - there on the Temple Mount - and they continue their discussion on the way across the Kidron Valley over to the Garden of Gethsemane, which is up on the next hill over, the Mount of Olives. And we aren't covering it on Sunday mornings, but if you want to write in at least the margin or maybe at the beginning of verse 32 - John 14, 15, 16 and 17 all fit right there. John is very good at giving us what the Lord was telling them as they were walking. And it really had a lot to do with the disciples' ministry to come. Jesus said He was going to leave and prepare a place for them, that they would continue the work that He had started. He promised them the Holy Spirit to come dwell within them. He said the world would be hostile, the work would be difficult, the suffering would be great, but the fields are white unto harvest. They would have the Holy Spirit not only living within them but falling upon them to empower them as they set out to do the work. Now most of it, I suspect, went right over their heads for the moment. They didn't really understand what He was saying. He told them their weeping would be turned to joy, the Holy Spirit would soon be given, He'd lead them in many other things - all of that found in those four chapters in the book of John. John 17:6 is a prayer of Jesus that He prays at the bottom, it seems, of this Valley as He walks from the Temple Mount down and then back up; and at the

bottom of the Kidron Valley was a Kidron Brook. It kind of emptied out and ran down towards the Jordan and all. The word "Kidron" means dark or murky. And this Valley, which is a Rift Valley from Jerusalem that runs all the way down to the Dead Sea, is the place that when the offerings took place up on the Temple Mount - especially during times like the Passover where Josephus, the historian, wrote that a quarter of a million sheep were slain over a week's period (can you imagine?) - all of that blood and all was hosed off and washed off, but it ran downhill into this Kidron Brook. So interestingly enough, as Jesus and the disciples went to the Mount of Olives to climb up towards the Garden of Gethsemane, they would have had to step through and step in this Brook that was now a mixture of blood and water. And I can't imagine what Jesus must have thought about as He was heading across, that He was about to become the ultimate Passover Lamb. It was going to be His blood that was going to save all. It must have been an amazing thought. I suspect the disciples had no clue.

On the other side of the Mount of Olives, though, there are many (even today if you go to Israel) private gardens. They have gates around them and fences and locks and all. Jesus had access to one. We have the opportunity, when we go there, to use one of them as well and have them open for us. Mark does not record what John does. He just takes us right to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus goes to prepare Himself and would spend the next three hours or more struggling with the sacrifice He was about to make, His flesh almost overwhelmed by the thought of being cut off from the Father. So, before the abuse and the suffering and the mistreatment and ultimately His death (at 3:00 the next afternoon) would take place, the Lord would spend several hours praying here, waiting for Judas to arrive with his guys in hand to grab Him. He would go willingly. And that'll come up in a couple of weeks in our study.

Mark's report on these three hours of suffering is covered in eleven verses - pretty short. Mark's purpose is Jesus the Servant. He willingly gives His life, so that's what he focuses on. Luke, who writes about Jesus the Man, or His flesh - God dwelling in human flesh - gives us all of the information about the physical side of the suffering: the sweating of great drops of blood, the torment, the battle between the flesh and that fearful kind of soul-piercing anguish that He experienced when Jesus realized that, in order to save us, He would have to have the lights turned off between Him and the Father. That separation would have to take place because that's what sin did. And more than all the physical difficulty,

this was all about Him taking the place of sin for us so we don't have to be separated from God.

I remember Spurgeon, I think, once writing of these verses. It's almost like when you walk in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus, you've got to take your shoes off. It's kind of like holy ground, right? It's a place where you are taken in to watch the depths of our Savior's suffering, as His head kind of bows under the weight of the horror that would come. The brunt of Him saving us and the agony seem to, at least, be anticipated here, and He would eventually, obviously, have victory over it.

But the big lesson is He was separated from the Father. And the lesson, I think, out of the passage is - if you put it with what we just heard Jesus speaking to the disciples about - these guys were pretty cocky, they made lots of promises, and they would not be able to fulfill any of them. But Jesus, in our example, goes to pray and then prays some more for the Father's strength to overcome His flesh. So the guys think they can do it on their own; Jesus knows better. And the lesson for us would be - get hooked up to the Lord in prayer, and stay there because He's your strength, certainly, to accomplish His will.

Well, verse 32 tells us, "Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.'" Luke (22:39) tells us that Jesus was accustomed to coming here. This was a familiar place. John will tell us (in chapter 18:2) that Judas knew of the place. And the Lord went here for a couple of reasons - to prepare for what was coming but also to be in a place that He could be found. He wasn't hiding. He wasn't on the run. He wanted to be taken. He would literally and willfully lay down His life. The Shepherd's hour of sacrifice had come. And so He went to the place that everyone was aware of: **Gat Shmanim**, olive press, Gethsemane. This is a place where, today if you go to Israel and you go to Gethsemane, there was an olive press. It was used to make food and medicine and fuels. Jesus came to pray before He would be crushed. And the olive industry, even in Israel today, finds its greatest value in olive oil. But in order to get good olive oil, you have to crush the olive and crush the seed. And so Jesus - interesting picture - comes here to prepare to be crushed so that He might save us. Isaiah, in chapter 53:5 (at least in the NIV), translates the words He was "crushed" instead of "bruised" for our iniquities. He was crushed so that we could have life. The appalling horror which Jesus subjects Himself to is probably out of reach for you and me in terms of an emotional understanding. I don't know of any

way to communicate clearly the anguish - except Jesus was going to go through it with prayer, and He would prepare Himself while His three inner-circle guys, the fellows who had been closest to Him, a stone's throw away, have not yet learned that they need to pray if they're going to get through it. In fact, we will read of them sleeping because of their sorrow. They didn't like what they were hearing. They didn't like what Jesus was saying. It wouldn't feel good. I'm sure it didn't. There was betrayal, and, "You're going to leave us," and the horrible news. And so they thought the best thing they could do was just sleep it off. And yet Jesus goes forward to the cross with time spent with the Father to get strength from Him. So you're given two pictures - one of confident disciples, another of a Lord (our example) who is absolutely dependent. I'm always interested when I hear young believers swear their allegiance to Jesus because on the one hand, it's very good to hear, "All right, man, I'm so glad to hear that." On the other hand, you realize that unless they learn to trust the Lord, they're never going to be able to do what they're promising. Right? The secret of strength is the prayerfulness and the dependency upon the Lord. When Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing," (John 15:5) He wasn't kidding. And a lot of times you'll hear young believers go, "I can do this. I'm gonna do this for the Lord." Well, you can try. But that's probably not going to work for you. And you can take them back to this example. Jesus would turn to the Father, agonizing with what was laying before Him. And the boys hadn't learned that yet. Now you might remember from just the gospels and from your reading, that it hadn't been much earlier that John and James and their mom came (in Mark 10) and said, "Hey, we'd like to get good jobs for our kids when you take over." And Jesus said, "Do you think they'll be able to drink the cup that I've got to drink from and be baptized with the baptism that I'm going to be baptized with?" And they said, "Oh, yeah. We can do that." They hadn't a clue. But they swore their allegiance. Peter, just in the last couple of verses back (verse 29), had said to the Lord - besides many other things that are recorded - that, "I've got some ambition that's different than the other guys, and they might bail out on You, but I'll never bail out on You." And yet here are three heroes - absolutely sleeping in Jesus' most difficult of moments; no support, no prayerfulness, no camaraderie. "Handle that, Lord."

So Jesus said to them, "Just sit here while I pray." Matthew (26:38) records the Lord saying, "My soul is sorrowful. Sit here and watch with Me." He said in Luke (22:40), "Come pray that you don't enter into temptation." We'll read that in a couple of verses down as well, in verse 38, "Just pray with Me." This is a great

moment to learn to pray because prayer will keep you from the temptation of leaning upon your own strength.

So Jesus knew the Sanhedrin was coming, that Judas was bringing a bunch of guys with him to arrest Him. He knew, I think, that His followers would catch the heat of it eventually, that they weren't going to stop with Jesus. And He wants them to pray for strength, and they're not learning that yet. They still think they can do it on their own. But notice He says, "Pray. I'm going to sit while I pray." And the word "*proseuchomai*" is an intense Greek word; it is written in the aorist tense here, which means to continue in earnestness. Start praying, don't stop. If there's one word of advice the Lord would give you as far as your walk with Him, that would be it - start praying, don't stop. This is the strength that God has available to you. No matter how difficult life can be, prayer is the ultimate place of finding help. And to stop seeking God or to stop seeking Him earnestly is to leave yourself kind of unable to do what God wants. And if you want an argument, just look at Jesus. For three hours or more, He practiced what He preached. He went to find strength from His Father to finish the work that He had come to do. I always find it very strange when I don't see people around for a while at church. And if I notice, and sometimes that's hard, I'll call them and go, "Hey, I haven't seen you around lately." And they'll say stuff like this, "Oh, we've really been goin' through it." "Yep." "But things are gettin' better, so we should be back by Sunday." And I'm thinkin' that's backward. You're going to skip church for a week, just skip it when everything's going well. You should be in church when things are going poorly. It should be the first place you go. But it's such an odd kind of reasoning to me. I don't quite understand it. But here, look at Jesus. Here's the Lord. Here's our example. He's our strength. You would do well to follow His example. But they were just upset, sorrowful, Luke (22:45) says. Their response had been self-confidence. The Lord said, "You're going to forsake Me," and they go, "No, we're going to take a nap." The Lord says, "You should be praying," they said, "No, we're going to take a nap." Pretty soon Peter would be grabbing a sword and trying to fight when Jesus was trying to just get them freed. Later on he would be following afar off as if somehow that works out for him, too. And all of those self-confident kinds of steps do nothing but drive home the fact that you can't do it without Him. Right? The way of falling is to ignore Jesus' Word and set aside His example.

Well, leaving the eight back behind (near the gate of the Garden), verse 33 tell us, "And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed." These inner three guys had been kind of privileged to be with

Jesus in places that no one else had been taken. When Jairus' daughter died (back in chapter 5), the Lord had taken these three boys in to see what He would do and how He would handle it. When (in chapter 9) He was up on the Mount of Transfiguration and transfigured before them and all, these three guys got to see it. In every place that He took them (apart from the others), it had to do with death - His victory over death, the fact that He was coming to die so that He might be glorified, and now as He was facing the cross as well. They were taken along with Him at every place so that they might look, and in every one of those examples, it was the Lord looking to the Father. In fact, you remember the Father spoke to Peter as he was trying to give great advice (or he thought) up on the Mount of Transfiguration and basically said to Peter, "Hey, shut up!" I'm pretty sure it's in the original. "Shut up!" "Here is My Son. Listen to Him!" Peter, "Oh, we're gonna build some condos and stay here forever." "Shut up!" Jesus tells the disciples what they must do and then goes off to do what He had suggested they do; because He had this horrible task of saving man, but He would have to substitute Himself in our place, which meant separation. That's the key. If you don't remember anything else, remember that. It's the subject of Psalm 22 - the isolation that Jesus had to suffer. Troubled and greatly distressed. " 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful,' " we read in verse 34, " 'even to death. Stay here and watch' " or, literally, "Watch with Me, pray with Me."

If you were at our Good Friday services this year, we did our study on Psalm 22. And one of the things that we mentioned was that Jesus' sorrow was unlike anything you and I have ever experienced. And I mentioned Friday that you can feel neglected by people and alienated, maybe taken advantage of, but whenever you're isolated like that, you can always turn to the Lord. He's always there. But Jesus couldn't. The Father had turned His back on His Son, which is why verse 1 says, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And at noon on the cross that day, darkness covered the land; the kind of darkness you couldn't see your hand in front of your face, as the Lord - for three hours - hung literally in silence until 3:00, alone. "Why have You forsaken Me? I remembered how You were always faithful to Israel. And when our Fathers prayed, You answered. But I'm like a worm, and they shoot out their tongue, and they shoot out their lip, and they mock Me. Where are You? Don't be far away from My groaning." And the Lord suffered the separation from His Father. That's what He faced here. And though the physical pain was enough to kill most men, that wasn't His greatest concern.

So, Jesus was about to drink the cup - the cup of God's wrath, the cup of God's anger against sin, the cup of God's judgment - and His flesh just was horrified. The terror was unbelievable. It wasn't Judas was coming with soldiers. It wasn't Peter would deny Him. It wasn't the pain of the crucifixion. It wasn't that they would all forsake Him, as we'll read in verse 50. It was this separation. It is this loneliness. It is the cost of sin. It's what happens to you and me. It's what happens to everyone until they meet a Savior. They're on their own. And Jesus was shocked at the prospect of having the sins of the world poured out upon Him and the horrifying consequence of separation. That was the thing that was most upsetting. That was the thing that He barely could handle physically. He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death." "I don't know if I can get through this." And when Luke (22:44) writes that He sweat great drops of blood, that's a stress on your flesh that not really any body should have to put up with. But He did. So His human soul, His flesh, shrank away from the cross, and the battle for that is fought here; not that He's turning but just that it's so overwhelming it's hard to imagine.

We read (in verse 35) that, "He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba,' " (or Daddy in Hebrew), " 'Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' " And so here's this short prayer of basically crying out, "Is there any other way to do this?" The word "*proseuchomai*" here is in the imperfect tense, not like the first one. It implies that He prayed the same thing time and time again. This wasn't a one-time prayer; this was a prayer that was just repeated as if, "Is there any other way?" And the word "Daddy," this intimate word - it's a prayer of anguish and horror, and it went on for hours; not for minutes but for hours. When you see this term "this cup" as you read through the Scriptures, especially as it's applying to Jesus' suffering, it had been the very same thing that I said John and James and their mother had heard when Jesus talked about their request for honor. He had shared it at the last supper (just in verses 23 and 24) when He took the cup, and He said, "This is the cup of My blood that's being shed" so that many could be made righteous. He would say to Peter, as he later sought to fight Jesus' enemies off (in John 18:11), "Put away the sword, Peter. Have I not come to drink this cup, and shall I not drink it?" But by then these times of prayer had been over. The Lord had been ready to go forward. It's the cup of redemption. It's the cup of God's wrath poured out upon Him. It's the cup of God's indignation. It's your Substitute standing for you. If man could be saved by any other method, then you and I,

being cut off, "Father, please, Daddy, please, find some other way. Let's go another route." And I mentioned on Good Friday that if you watch Jesus' anguish over the thought of losing His relationship with the Father, which He's had before the foundations of the world, and then you watch how quickly Christians will somehow forfeit that relationship for sin or flesh, Jesus valued it so highly; we somehow value it so lowly. "If there's any other way, take this. Let's go another route." Imagine the Father's love that would allow His Son to suffer so that Isaiah was able to write (in chapter 53), "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him and to put Him to grief, and to make His soul an offering for sin, and His seed so that He might prolong your life. And by the knowledge of Him, many would be made whole. He'll heal you of your iniquity." This was all the suffering that Jesus faced here in Gethsemane. "If there's any other way." Well, if there's any other way, then the cross is cruel. If there's any other way for you to get to heaven, then it's a foolish, unnecessary and just wicked thing to have done - to have Him crucified. But if there's no other way, then that's the only way you can go. We read in Galatians 2:21, "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain," for nothing. If you could work your way to heaven, if you could do good works, if you could earn your spot, then Jesus didn't need to die. So Jesus contemplates having every sin of every man and woman who ever lived poured out upon Him, and this sin that was poured out upon Him, because of the nature of sin, cuts you off from the Father, separates you and leaves you by yourself. That's the struggle that He faced. Was it brief? Yeah. Three hours or so, it seems. But horrendous. Horrifying. And it gives insight into, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" God did this so that you wouldn't have to be forsaken, and He cried - at least according to the verb tense of the prayer - over and over and over again. Sometimes these name-it-and-claim-it people say, "Well, if you pray more than once, that's not faith." Well, Jesus is good enough for me. He prayed it constantly. It moved His heart. So, He cried out. How we need to learn to pray. Because you see this great anguish in Jesus' life, and then you look at the disciples and go, "It couldn't have been more different." Three guys (Pastor Jack makes a snoring sound). You know Peter snored. He was irritating all the time. (Laughing) And then there's Jesus who's sweating great drops of blood, unable to just get up off the deck, hour after hour crying out for help. So different. If it's good enough for Jesus, it better be good enough for you.

Well, this hour was repeated at least three times from what we can gather from the Scriptures - each time same intense struggle, each time very difficult to get through. So much so in His flesh that He was sweating, like I said, great drops of

blood; so much so that the gospels tell us that the Father sent some angels to minister to Him so He could get through it (Luke 22:43). Divine strength to get through it. The Father's answer was pretty clear. "There is no other way to save man than for You to substitute Yourself and Your blood" - His life for ours. Jesus, in His prayer, is not delivered. But by the time He's finished, He's strengthened to do the work. Didn't get out from under it, didn't find another way to go, but in His time of prayer found the strength that He needed to stand. And so it is the Lord returning to the prayers time and time again, all the more earnestly. No other way. He needed to find strength from the Father. You might remember that Hebrews 5 passage that says, "In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death learned as a Son obedience to the things that He suffered" (verses 7-8). That's a reference to this whole three hours of agony that the Lord went through so that you and I could be saved. Well, like I said, after each round He comes back to see His three chosen, trained guys sleeping, sorrowful, unable to just stay awake. Unlike Jesus, who is finding strength on His knees, these guys are just out like a light.

Verse 37 says, "Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' " Why Peter? Well, I think because Peter had been the most boastful - he's our example. And notice the Lord calls him Peter. That's his old name. That's the old man who the Lord called when He gave him a new name with great hope. He calls him by his old name now; he's kind of living like the old guy. Look, let's be candid. The Lord was pretty straight up with him. "Can't you stay awake for an hour?!" Willing spirit, weak flesh. "I'm praying. You should be praying as well." But before you know it, Peter is back asleep. Now let me ask you something. How long would an hour be to you if you had to just pray for an hour? We have prayer meetings here every week - men and women alternating on Saturdays - for an hour. We have twenty, thirty guys and girls that show up with two and three hundred prayer requests. Folks are great at asking for prayer. It's another story to pray. It can be more difficult. An hour for some of you would be an impossibility. "An hour?!!!! An hour?!!!!" Football games last three. Baseball games last four. Your dinner lasts longer. "Can I pray for an hour?" Not Peter. Out he went because he just wasn't convinced that was where strength would lie. He would fall asleep three times. He would go out and deny the Lord three times. He would be given three opportunities later on to confess His love for Jesus. But that's the lesson, isn't it?

Verse 39 tells us, "Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words." It was that same agony. "And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him." He questioned all of them. "What are you doing? I thought you could pray for an hour!" "Oh, I don't know. It's late." Verse 41, "Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you will sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.' " The disciples just hadn't learned the one thing that I think we need to learn, and maybe we learn mentally but not so much in practical terms - and that is we need to learn to pray. We need to learn that our strength lies with the Lord, that there's no other place to turn. Prayer is bringing a gun to a knife fight. It really puts you in a position to be stronger than anything that would oppose you. And Jesus wakes them twice. They can't really give a good explanation why they're not staying awake, why they're not praying. We don't really have an answer for that. It's just our flesh. It's so weak. But any ministry that you're involved with - the best thing you can do is pray. They professed loyalty. I think they loved the Lord. I'm pretty sure they were there for good cause. But they just couldn't learn the lesson. They couldn't drink the cup. They couldn't pray for an hour. But notice - after three hours, the Lord is ready. The battle, for Him, has been won in prayer. It would be time to head for Calvary. There would be no rest from here on out. The night would be filled with abuse and dragging Him from one place to another and mockery and difficulty; and then six hours on a cross before His work was finished. Judas was approaching. The army was with him, maybe as many as a thousand people, from what the gospels tell us. I don't know if they thought Jesus was going to run or He was so powerful they'd need that many folks. But Jesus could rise now because He'd kneeled down. He could stand now because He'd fallen down. And the boys were going to forsake Him because they hadn't been praying yet. The difference between our Lord's example of prayer and dependency and the way the disciples had chosen - proud and promising and yet unable - I think is the best lesson you can learn at Gethsemane. His agony was excruciating. No one stood by Him but the Father. And then, in the end, no one stood by Him - not even the Father - so that you and I could stand without ever having to stand alone.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

April 24, 2017