

In Gethsemane: The Folly of Pride and The Crushing Cost of Redemption

Mark 14:26–42

We remember that today marks the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the back of a colt. We were there in Mark 11 a few weeks ago, and have been working our way through Mark's account of the days leading up to the Lord's cross where he takes on himself the guilt of sinners who look to him for salvation. We will obviously not make it to the resurrection before next Sunday, so we will take a short break to consider the glory and power of the Lord's resurrection next Sunday, and return to our expositional approach to the remainder of the Gospel.

Mark 14:26–42 — ²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' ²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹ Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." ³⁰ And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." ³¹ But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you." And they all said the same.

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."

PRAY

The Futile Folly of Pride vv 26–31

The transition from Passover to Lord's Supper is accomplished. The meal is over, the new covenant is introduced. They sing a hymn and leave the upper room, headed just outside the city to the Mount of Olives. I put a devotional note on the app about the beauty of the **Hallel Psalms** they would have sung. Those Psalms lay hold of the power of the resurrection beyond the suffering of the cross.

2

The supper began with the exit of Judas, the betrayer of the Son of God. Judas is out, but he is not the only defector. “You will all fall away,” says Jesus. Then he quotes Zechariah 13 – “I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.” God the Father strikes down the Shepherd he has appointed, and there will be great suffering. But God will refine his people through their suffering and they will again call on his name. He will answer them and restore them as his people. Isaiah 53 pictures with stunning accuracy the Lord’s suffering. But Zechariah 13 also holds a critical place as the Lord predicts exactly what is happening in these hours. It is a shocking prophecy, and none of them can bear the thought of what he just said.

Rather than examine himself, Peter, who loves to enter the room *mouth first*, says, “Not me. Everyone else, sure, but obviously not me. I will not fall away.” Jesus says **all**, Peter says, “Well, **all** is everyone else; I am the exception.” Jesus speaks directly to Peter, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” Jesus puts that attention getter of certainty on the front end, **truly**. Every word of scripture is truth and endures forever, but when he begins with **truly**, that is help us rein in our focus so that we carefully listen. What follows is certain and unalterable. **You, Peter. You will deny me.** Peter ignores the stern warning from the Lord, and an essence says, **Deny? Ha! No! Die! I won’t deny you, but I will die with you.**

v 29 — I will not. **v 31** — If I must die; I will not deny.

Question: Where is the source of Peter’s hope and confidence? Answer: In himself; his prideful flesh.

- Pride causes his ear and intellect to be deaf to the Lord’s stern warnings. **Pride is a deafening sin.**
- Pride causes his eye to see spiritual weakness in everyone else, but miss it in himself.
“Though they all fall away, I won’t.” **Pride is a blinding sin.**
- **Pride is a sin of stupidity and foolishness that causes us to grossly overestimate our strength, and catastrophically underestimate our weakness.** When all of the tsunami of evil comes against the Savior, this strong, strapping fisherman can’t even stay awake for an hour in the midst of this greatest of spiritual battles.
- Pride is an infectious sin. After Jesus quoted, Zechariah’s prophecy and then warned Peter sternly, rather, one might hope he would shut his mouth and give serious thought to what the Lord said. Instead, he fills the air with arrogant denials. He robs himself of the opportunity to process what Jesus said, and he robbed everyone else in the room of the opportunity to think and understand what Jesus said. After his vain boasting, everyone else seems sucked into his vortex. **v 31: And they all said the same.** Pride is an infectious sin.

3

Take seriously the lesson from Peter and those whom he infected. Brother, sister, be stone-cold serious about putting pride to death everywhere it is found. It has 1,000 heads and 10,000 masks.

- When I disregard or ignore or don't pick up God's word, be certain it is pride at work.
- When I see scripture commands and determine that they are outdated or out of step, be sure deadly pride has a deep root in my heart.
- When I think and live as though I am able to fight battles and make spiritual advance in my strength — and when I display that attitude by neglecting adequate physical rest and essential spiritual care for my soul, pride has blinded my mind, and a fall is coming.

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before destruction.¹ And know that the spiritual work you think you are doing in your strength is actually being opposed by God. He opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.² Pride plays for keeps but produces no life. Put it to death.

I feel sorry for Peter, in a way. His big mouth left him as a central figure in history, because of his breath-taking hubris. But had I been there, I might have raced Peter to the history books. Yet the Lord uses this bitter lesson to humble him, and comes back specifically to Peter to restore him. His failure reminds us that the best of men are still men at best. Our hope and confidence must never be in ourselves or any human. Our confidence must always and only be in our God. Now let's move into the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus and see what we can learn as his hour of suffering arrives.

The Crushing Cost of Redemption

Communion with God was lost in the Genesis Garden through death-producing sin. The great offensive assault against sin's dark domain was launched in this Garden outside Jerusalem. Life-giving communion with God will be restored and realized in the New Creation, which will be infinitely more beautiful than a garden in Central Park in New York. The City of God will flow with a river of life and trees that have leaves that heal the nations — all recovered in that New Creation garden. But the path to the Celestial City *first* leads through Gethsemane. Gethsemane's garden is dark and terrifying. It matches the darkness of the death that sin produced in Eden. So we see, and hear, and feel the agony of the Lord as he walks through this garden on the way to the cross. It's still there today just outside the walls of the old city at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

¹ Proverbs 16:18

² James 4:6

4

The Lord takes the inner three with him deeper into the garden — those we might consider his best friends on a human basis: Peter, James, and John. On display in this passage, as much as any passage in the gospels, is the human nature of the God Man, Jesus. The anguish of his human soul is vividly woven into his prayer in the garden. When we read of this struggle in prayer, questions historically arise about the nature of Jesus's humanity and deity. Liberal scholars point here and say that the prayer the Lord makes indicates that he is not God — or at least he is not God at that moment. Perhaps he took off his deity when he came in human form. The Chalcedonian Creed, from 451 AD, gives us a framework to express the truth of the two natures of Christ seen in Scripture. We won't do a full study of it today, but perhaps we can schedule a Theology Thursday to consider the Chalcedon statement. Part of the creed summarizes the Bible truths of Christ's deity and human nature into these statements:

The Lord Jesus Christ, is at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin...

As Jesus pleads with the father, it is not a divine disagreement or division. It is his innocent human soul, expressing his desire to not endure the torment of being forsaken by his father, as he bears away the sin and guilt of others on his cross. That will be a crushing blow. There is mystery here, but there is not loss of deity, nor any separation from the Father in nature. That simply could not be.

Let's see now the cost of our redemption as he prepares for the cross. Three statements in vv 33–34 give us a clearer insight into what is happening:

- He is greatly distressed — it connotes fright and terror
- He is troubled — full of heaviness, full of loathing
- His soul is very sorrowful, even to death — captures the grief and pain of, perhaps, a husband who has a heart attack after being notified that his wife has been killed in a car crash. It is a sorrow, the penetrates beyond the emotions and is debilitating to the body itself.

The terms are comprehensive in describing the grief and sorrow as he moves directly to the cross. He is aware that the perfect union of the eternal Son with the eternal Father is about to endure something that has never been experienced before: The Father will forsake the Son when sin is placed on him. The prospect is more than the human soul of Jesus can bear up under. It's so severe that Dr. Luke tells us sweat drops became mixed with blood as capillaries burst under the strain. While he

5

pleads with the Father for another way, the confidence of his human soul, the source of his hope is the omnipotent and loving hands of God the Father.

Father, if possible, let this pass. All things are possible with you. But as I have done from the beginning, so I do now. Not what I will, but what you will. An echo of John 5: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.” The **Son of God** has been on the **mission of God**, according to the **plan of God** from eternity. While there is grief and horror at what is coming, he willfully submits his human soul confidently to the love and power of God.

This is the greatest spiritual battle that has ever been waged at the highest cost that has ever been paid. Oh, that we would follow the Lord through his suffering in the garden. While we will never suffer as he did, suffering is part of the Christian experience. That’s what Mark 13 was about. That’s what Zechariah 13 is telling us. The model and pattern that the Lord has set for us to endure suffering — and not just endure, but **win** in eternity — is that we are to consider the love, wisdom, goodness, and power of our God, and submit ourselves to what he has planned. We are to take it seriously and wrestle with our souls and our wills, if necessary, reminding them of truth in the midst of the battle. Jesus did this. Three times he warned Peter James, and John to do it, but they did not.

Let’s walk back with the Lord from where he has fallen on his face in prayer to where he left Peter James and John. They are also in a spiritual battle, but they sleep through it. He tells them to **watch** in v 34. He tells them to **watch and pray** in v 38. The word **watch** is almost a military term; an instruction that one would give to a Sentry. Be on guard. Be alert. Evil is advancing toward you. Peter, Satan himself is aiming for you. Be on guard! There are **external threats from evil**, but there are also **internal threats from temptation**. Watch and pray that you might not enter into temptation, that which springs from your flesh, from your old nature.

When the Lord warns them, and us by extension, to watch and pray, it is not just cultural courtesy speech — like when your mom says **Be careful!** when you walk out the door for school. He is prepping us to fight, win, and live. Your enemy, the devil, is seeking to steal, kill and destroy you. Be on guard and pray. But they can’t muster the energy to deal seriously with the threats. He says to them, the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Let’s learn from their failure.

6

The flesh with its self-protective ramparts is the internal battle we must engage. Our old sinful nature dies hard. Part of the battle we face is with our physical bodies. Peter, James, and John were exhausted. They could not physically stay awake to battle spiritually. So a lesson: care for your body. Rest and be ready for spiritual work and spiritual battles. Though spiritual, they will require physical endurance. It takes something out of you to pray, and to lay hold of the throne of God on someone's behalf. Remember that our bodies are given us to serve God **first**. They are not ours to spend on comfort, ease, and entertainment at the expense of advancing spiritual priorities and God's kingdom.

Of course there is spiritual preparation needed for battling sin and evil. For them, they have been under his teaching for 3 ½ years. They have been under the word of the Lord Jesus. It must be the same for us. We are to be under the word of God, learning it, hearing it, being equipped for battle against sin and father of lies, who would destroy us. As we love and grow in God's word, we will not merely survive; we will make great advance in godliness and usefulness to the kingdom. Do you want your life to matter for the Kingdom? Do you want those you love to know Christ and his love and power and be delivered from the domain of darkness? Then embrace spiritual and physical training and so be ready to wield the tools God gives us to defeat our enemy and bring down strongholds.

Forgiveness in Failure — The third time Jesus comes to them and catches them sleeping, they are utterly shamed and embarrassed. They can't even respond. They don't know how to answer him. Yet realize this: **The grace and forgiveness of the Lord is frontloaded.** Back in **v 28** Jesus told them that he would go before them to Galilee. In other words, he did not forsake **them** as they forsook **him**. It's as though he says, "You will all defect and desert me as I bear away your sin and the sin of the world. But I will conquer your sin. I will defeat your death. And I will go before you, my dear defectors whom I love, and I will cook breakfast on the beach and call you to the table. Christian, however weak your faith, it is not the strength of your faith, but the power of the Lord that holds you and forgives you. As he went before them to Galilee, he has gone before us to prepare a place. And he will come and call us again to himself.

PRAY — Lord, you knew no sin, but became sin for us. You bore our griefs when you had none. You carried our sorrows. Thank you for your love — the cost of which we cannot understand.

As we will come to the Lord's Table, hear these encouraging words from Octavius Winslow, the 19th century Baptist pastor: Christ took your cup of grief, your cup of the curse, pressed it to his lips, drank it to its dregs, then filled it with his sweet, pardoning, sympathizing love, and gave it back for you to drink, and to drink forever!