

THE SCROLLS

Meeting The Messiah | Mark 14:32-65

Life Lesson

True surrender is forged in struggle. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus faced unimaginable agony—not only the physical suffering of the cross, but also the spiritual weight of bearing our sin and experiencing separation from the Father. Yet amid distress, betrayal, and loneliness, He chose obedience: “Not what I will, but what You will.” The lesson for us is this: faith is proven not when life is easy, but when it is excruciating. Obedience is not the absence of fear or anguish; it is trusting God in the midst of it.

Examine Scripture

32 Then they came to a place named Gethsemane, and he told his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 34 He said to them, “I am deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake.” 35 He went a little farther, fell to 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. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.” 37 Then he came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Couldn’t you stay awake one hour? 38 Stay awake and pray so that you won’t enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39 Once again he went away and prayed, saying the same thing. 40 And again he came and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open. They did not know what to say to him. 41 Then he came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up; let’s go. See, my betrayer is near.” 43 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of

And Then There Were None

After the Passover Meal, Jesus and the Disciples walked slowly to the Garden of Gethsemane. These steps were not just toward a place to pray; they marked the beginning of Jesus’ journey toward a place to die: the cross. Over the next few weeks, as we focus on Jesus’ work on the cross, it is important to understand the extreme physical torment of crucifixion. One word that could be used to describe crucifixion is “excruciating.” Though it literally means “great agony or torment,” it is a compound word from the Latin “ex,” which means “out of or from,” and “cruciate,” which means “cross.” So “excruciating” is born from the idea of “out of or from the cross.” With the weight of betrayal (Judas) and denial (Peter) already pressing upon His heart, Jesus walked to the Garden of Gethsemane to begin His last hours, hours that will be beyond difficult; they will be excruciating.

The very place of prayer reveals the excruciating agony Jesus faced in this moment. He chose to go to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. In Hebrew, “Gethsemane” means “oil press.” In Scripture, oil often symbolizes the Holy Spirit. As one commentator writes, Gethsemane is where “the Spirit of God was pressed or crushed.” It is here that Jesus agonized in prayer. In fact, in (Luke 22:44), it is the only place the Greek word “agon” is used. It means “struggle, fight, often an athletic contest.” Literally, it means to be “engaged in combat.” So the setting is set, and the emotional and spiritual battle begins.

Vs. 32-35

In our text, several factors indicate the excruciating agony Jesus experiences in the Garden of Gethsemane. First, as Jesus told the Disciples to sit and pray, He went a little farther with Peter, James, and John. Mark tells us that Jesus “began to be deeply distressed and troubled” (v. 33). Even Jesus said, “I am deeply grieved to the point of death” (v. 34). As He pressed a little farther, Jesus “fell to the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him” (v. 35). The traditional position for prayer was standing (Mark 11:25; Matt. 6:5;

the Twelve, suddenly arrived. With him was a mob, with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. 44 His betrayer had given them a signal. "The one I kiss," he said, "he's the one; arrest him and take him away under guard." 45 So when he came, immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. 46 They took hold of him and arrested him. 47 One of those who stood by drew his sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. 48 Jesus said to them, "Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal, to capture me? 49 Every day I was among you, teaching in the temple, and you didn't arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." 50 Then they all deserted him and ran away. 51 Now a certain young man, wearing nothing but a linen cloth, was following him. They caught hold of him, 52 but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked. 53 They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes assembled. 54 Peter followed him at a distance, right into the high priest's courtyard. He was sitting with the servants, warming himself by the fire. 55 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they could not find any. 56 For many were giving false testimony against him, and the testimonies did not agree. 57 Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, stating, 58 "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another not made by hands.'" 59 Yet their testimony did not agree even on this. 60 Then the high priest stood up before them all and questioned Jesus, "Don't you have an answer to what these men are testifying against you?" 61 But he kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest questioned him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 "I am," said Jesus, "and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven." 63 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? 64 You have heard the blasphemy. What is your decision?" They all condemned him as deserving death. 65 Then some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to beat him, saying, "Prophecy!" The temple servants also took him and slapped him.

Personal Notes

Luke 18:11, 13). For Jesus to fall to the ground shows the immense pain and agony He was already experiencing. The physical distress of Jesus was overwhelming and brought Him to the "point of death." But why or how?

Though Mark did not address Jesus's physical torment, Luke does. In (Luke 22:44), we read, "Being in anguish, he prayed more fervently, and his sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground." While some argue that Luke uses this as a metaphor to describe the amount of sweat falling from Jesus as He prayed, it is actually a medical phenomenon called hematidrosis. The Journal of the American Medical Association (a secular journal) describes hematidrosis as "a result of hemorrhage into the sweat glands," leaving the skin "fragile and tender." In other words, when a person experiences extreme shock or stress, the capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and hemorrhage blood into the sweat glands, leaving the skin feeling like a severe sunburn multiplied many times over. Though few, there are documented cases of hematidrosis, confirming that Jesus, in extreme stress and agony, truly sweated drops of blood.

If hematidrosis were not enough, the physical effects of His anxiety and stress would have been enough to cause Him agony. Again, medical journals define anxiety as "a medical condition that designates a state characterized by a subjective feeling of fear and uneasy anticipation (apprehension) usually with a definite topical content and associated with physiological accompaniments of fear; such as breathless, choking sensations, palpitation, restlessness, increased muscular tension, tightness in the chest, trembling, sweating, flushing, and broken sleep." In other words, even if hematidrosis did not cause Jesus physical agony, His anxiety would have. In this moment, Jesus experienced more agony, stress, and excruciating anxiety than any human ever has or ever will. It was enough to cause His physical body to fail Him, all before even experiencing crucifixion.

Vs. 36

Why such agony? Was it simply Jesus' anxiety about facing crucifixion? No. When Jesus prayed, "Abba, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will" (v. 36), the cup was not crucifixion; it went far beyond physical suffering. Jesus was referring to the cup of God's wrath. That is what He wished would be taken from Him: the incredible agony of being separated from the Father. Robert Stein writes, "He feared 'the' death that no one else would ever need to or be able to experience. He would experience God's wrath in order that those who believe in him would not have to face it."

God has a burning anger toward sin. He is a God of love, but He is also a God of justice, and justice demands punishment for sin. Sin

Personal Notes

has distorted all of God's creation; therefore, God hates sin. It has placed His special creation, mankind, in direct opposition to Him. He hates sin, and He must punish it! On the cross, Jesus became our substitute. He willingly placed Himself as the object of God's wrath against sin. In fact, "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21). He died for our sins. The Greek word "for" is "huper." This means more than simply dying on our behalf. It means He died because of our sins. (Isaiah 53: 4-6, 12) reminds us: "Yet he himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains; but we in turn regarded him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the Lord has punished him for the iniquity of us all." Paul writes, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). John writes, "He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). Propitiation refers to the turning away of the wrath of God as the just judgment of our sin by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

This is the cup Jesus wanted to pass from Him. He knew He was going to experience the full wrath of God for all sin for all time. In order for this to be accomplished, Jesus would become our sin, and God's wrath would be unleashed. In that moment, Jesus would experience separation from the Father as He became our sin and our curse, leading Him to cry out: "Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?" which is translated, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mark 15:33). In other words, the source of Jesus' agony and anxiety was our sin, it was us! Yet, He still said, "Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will" (v. 36).

Vs. 37-42

If all of this was not enough to cause Jesus agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, now His Disciples, His friends, could not be there for Him in His time of need. When Jesus returned to the Disciples, "he came and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping?'" (v. 37). Though all of them were sleeping, Jesus called Peter out. Perhaps this reflects Peter's bold declaration that he would never deny Jesus. Regardless, none of the Disciples were there for Jesus. They fell asleep three times. They could not stay up and pray with Jesus. You have to wonder if the Disciples assumed this was the falling away Jesus told them would happen, especially Peter denying Him three times. Yet this was only the beginning of their falling away. Jesus even expressed frustration as He said, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (v. 41).

Personal Reflection

1. When I consider the “excruciating” agony Jesus faced in Gethsemane—physical, emotional, and spiritual—how does that deepen my understanding of the cost of my sin?
2. Jesus prayed, “Not what I will, but what you will.” In what area of my life is God calling me to surrender my will to His, even when it feels overwhelming or costly?
3. The disciples slept while Jesus agonized. When have I been spiritually asleep—unaware, indifferent, or weak—when I should have been watchful and prayerful?
4. Jesus endured the cup of God’s wrath so I would not have to. How does knowing He became my substitute change how I view grace, repentance, and obedience?
5. If my sin contributed to the suffering of Christ, how should that reality shape how I live, speak, and respond to temptation today?

Commentaries

Exalting Jesus in Mark by Daniel Akin

MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Mark 9-16 by John MacArthur

BECNT: Mark by Robert Stein

Mt. Zion’s Mission

Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to
MAKE, MATURE, and MULTIPLY
disciples of Jesus Christ.

Again, before we judge the Disciples too harshly, we must ask ourselves: “Would I have stayed awake and prayed? Would I have been there for Jesus?” Our intentions may be noble and pure, but often “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (v. 38). None of us would have been any stronger than the Disciples. How do we know this? Because in a greater sense, we are the very hands Jesus refers to when He says, “See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners” (v. 41). It is our sinful hands that betrayed Jesus, took hold of Him, beat Him, scourged Him, and crucified Him.

Vs. 43-52

A kiss! That is how Jesus was betrayed by Judas. What was a typical rabbinical greeting, expressing love and respect, became a kiss full of venom and betrayal. Judas used it as a signal to the crowd to help them secure Jesus. In the darkness of the Garden, there could be no mistake about who they apprehended. Obviously, the crowd was prepared for a fight, but Jesus, with the cross before Him, went quietly. However, Peter had other plans. He responded by cutting off one of the servant’s ears. Do not confuse this with a precise cut to the ear; Peter was likely going for his throat. Mark does not name Peter as the one who struck the servant, but John does. This leads to a rebuke of Peter and the crowd. They had plenty of opportunities to arrest Jesus publicly, but now they do so in secret, hiding their deceit. Lastly, we see Jesus’ words about the Disciples coming to fruition as they scatter, leaving Him alone: “Then they all deserted him and ran away” (v. 50).

Vs. 53-65

The trials of Jesus are divided into two parts: the religious trial and the civil trial. Both trials are rife with deceit, slander, and falsehoods intended to convict Jesus. These “kangaroo courts” were designed to discredit and convict Jesus of blasphemy, resulting in the death penalty.

However, what was meant to be another trap becomes a not-so-subtle declaration by Jesus. The high priest demands, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (v. 61). After prolonged silence, waiting for the right question, Jesus responds, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven” (v. 62). This is the same “I am” formula (ego eimi) found in the Gospel of John. Jesus is evoking the very name of God, “I am who I am” (Ex. 3:14). The high priest’s and the crowd’s reaction shows they understood this declaration.

Even as the high priest, the crowd, and Satan himself scoff at Jesus, smirking, thinking of their presumptuous victory, Jesus is in complete control. These are not random acts or events; they are the redemptive threads woven together by the sovereign hands of God and His Messiah, Jesus!