

## They All Left Him: The Resolve of Jesus to Die Alone

Mark 14:43-52

### Intro: One of the Worst Feelings

One of the worst feelings we experience as humans is the feeling of being all alone. Sure, the feeling of fear, anger, discouragement, disappointment, despair have their place in the top ten of worst feelings, BUT loneliness is definitely up there. Why?

BECAUSE God created us NOT to be alone. In Gen. 1, when God created all things, he said, "It is good." In fact, you hear a running commentary from God after each day of creation saying, "It is good. It is good. It is very good." BUT then, in ch2, after he creates the first man, he says, "It is NOT good...that man should be alone." We were created to be together. Isolation was not God's original design.

But, as a result of sin's entrance into the world, we now experience loneliness. That experience was UNKNOWN before sin came into the world. And I know, many of you know that experience all too well.

- I think of some of our ***homebound members***, who, not only already struggled with feeling alone because they couldn't *get out* to see people, *but now* many of them can't even have visitors to come see them.

- I think of those who've had to ***isolate during Covid*** and can't come to church to get and hug or even wave from a distance.
- I think of ***widows/widowers***, who spent 50+ years of their lives with their spouse, only to have that intimacy snatched from them in moment because of a heart attack. And the feelings of aloneness quickly set in, and they have to figure out, "How do I do life without this person by my side?"
- I think of some of our ***unmarried members***, who long to come home to someone at night, with whom they can share the most intimate relationship to be shared on this earth.
- Loneliness can even be experience when your ***married***; you have no relational connection with your spouse, and even though you're married, you feel all alone.
- I think of ***college students***, who are away from their families for the first time and they're trying to figure out life out from under the care and protection and guidance of their parents. And they can feel alone. (Thank God for cell phones and facetime—whereas, for many of our elderly members, all you had in college were letters, snail mail.)

To feel alone is, indeed, one of hardest experiences...BECAUSE we were not designed to be

alone. It is a result of sin's entrance into the world that corrupted everything and caused the experience of aloneness.

And it is not a coincidence that this was Jesus' very experience as he headed to the cross to die. Jesus died alone. In fact, he was *resolved* to do so. That's why he came! He came to take upon himself the experiences the curse of the Fall—the effects of sin—like loneliness...and did that FOR US.

That's the point of this passage. Jesus resolved to die alone. Now, where do we get from this passage? Well, like any good story-teller, Mark explains this account in good story form, which includes the Setting, the Rising Conflict, the Climax, and the New Setting. And in any story, the main emphasis is the Climax. And so I want to walk through this account, leading up to that climax, and we'll really press in there.

### **The Setting: An Excessive Set Up**

Notice how the scene is set, and how excessive the preparation for the arrest of Jesus is. [43]

This is a little over-the-top, isn't it? A crowd with swords and clubs...seriously? And what was Jesus just doing? It's not like he was committing some public crime or endangering anyone! He was alone in

a garden, praying! And they abruptly approached him. It says, “while he was still speaking” they came.

Why this abruptness? Why a crowd (which we have evidence elsewhere to suggest it could’ve been over 600 people)? Why clubs—a wooden instrument used for close combat fighting? Why swords—a weapon used to kill? What’s the deal with this excessive set up?

I think we get a clue from the last part of [v43, “FROM the chief priests and the scribes and the elders”]

Judas, the crowd, the swords, the clubs came FROM the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Now they probably didn’t supply the swords and the clubs, but I guarantee they told the crowd to come armed. Why would they do this?

Remember who these religious leaders are. They made up the highest religious court of that day, called the Sanhedrin. And they hated Jesus. They’ve been figuring out how to kill him since chapter 3! Why? Did they seriously think he was a threat? Did they actually think he would bring harm on people?

No, Jesus has been making them look bad. More accurately, he’s been making them look as they really

are—self-righteous, power-hungry, approval-craving men. And so, they want him taken out, and they take excessive means to see it happen.

Mark this: We are willing to do drastic things and take drastic measure to get what we want. When our hearts are governed by extreme desires, we will take extreme measures to fulfill those desires. Check your heart. Ask yourself: What do I love so much that I'm willing to sin to get it?

This is an excessive set up because these men have excessive cravings. That's the setting. Now, we move to...

### **The Rising Conflict: A Betrayal, an Arrest, and a Feeble Defense [v44]**

Notice, Mark doesn't even refer to Judas by name, here. What does he call him? "The betrayer." In v.43, he is referred to as "one of the twelve" disciples of Jesus, and now, "the betrayer." This is what he is now known for! His sin has become his very identity.

Now, as one of the twelve, and now the betrayer, Judas knew where Jesus would be. He knew his daily habits, and so he knew exactly where to take this crowd and the religious leaders to find him. And so he tells them beforehand, "The one I kiss is the one you seize."

The signal of a kiss is interesting. This probably wouldn't have been a common greeting between rabbis and disciples. And even more interestingly, the word that used to describe the actual kiss is not one that connotes modesty and reservation, but lavishness and passion. [v45]

He likely kissed him on the cheek. This is not sensual. But it does seem it was done in a way that, at least the very least, didn't look indifferent. It looked genuine and passionate. What's going on here? Why didn't he just point to Jesus and say, "He's the one!" Why betray with a kiss?

Think of the irony. A kiss is meant to display homage and respect, and even intimacy and deep friendship. And that's the exact opposite of what's happening. One person describes it as "an act of love... performed for a mission of hate." (Edwards, 438)

I think this is the beginning of the mockery that Jesus will experience from here until he's finally dead on a cross. Judas sets the stage for what Jesus will have to endure—and he does it in the form of irony: a betrayal with a kiss. And this triggers the arrest. [v46]

And so, he's bound, and the disciples are still there with him. Remember what they said they would do if anything like this ever happened? 14:31, "We will die

with you before we would forsake you!” Are they gonna live up to that confident assertion? [v47]

We know from other gospel accounts that this was Peter, but Mark intentionally doesn’t mention his name because it seems he’s representing all of the disciples here. It’s a feeble defense, and kind of a cheap shot.

*Ever seen a kid talk a big game among his peers, like he’s the strongest and can beat any of them up? And the way he “proves” it catching them when they’re off guard. Punching them when they’re not looking.*

That’s kind of what this disciple is doing. It’s his way of trying to live up to his confident assertion that he will to die along with Jesus. And it looks like he IS willing, at this point. And so the rising conflict/tension that we’re feeling is: Is Jesus gonna actually have to go at this alone, or will he have the support of his closest friends?

And that’s where we come to the climax of this passage, the change that takes place, where we realize: Jesus is resolved to die alone.

### **The Climax: Jesus Resolves to Die Alone**

Notice Jesus’ response to all that’s taking place.  
[vv48-49a]

See what he's saying? "Your excessive force is entirely inconsistent. Why you doing this now? You've seen me plenty of times before in the temple. Why are you coming now? And why with such excessive force, like I'm some kind of robber." See that?

The word "robber" was a word that was often used to describe, not merely a thief, but as someone who is leading a rebellion against the government. And interestingly, it's the same word used to describe those who would be on the right and left of Jesus when he hangs on the cross. Mark 15:27, "And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left."

Is this a coincidence? I don't think so. Jesus knows that he would be crucified among robbers because he would be condemned as one. And he's saying, "You're condemning me as a robber, but you've seen me. You've seen that I'm not that. And yet you come, and arrest in order to condemn as a robber."

Why? What's the answer Jesus gives for WHY they are condemning as a robber? And why are they just NOW seizing him? Why not before? [vv48-49]

You know what he's saying? He's saying, "You are only doing what you were prophesied to do!" They are doing what the OT Scriptures said would happen!

“LET the SCRIPTURES be fulfilled. Let it happen according to the pre-promised plan of God.”

You know what that tells me about Jesus? He was resolved to die. “Let it happen.” But it also tells me, that God is ultimately in control of all the events that are taking place here. There’s more irony: Though it looks like Jesus is just a passive victim of the evil of these men. It looks like they’re in control....

After all, it says, “*THAY seized him.*” The word “seize” is used four times in the passage. There’s some irony here. Those who look like they’re in control of the one who looks out of control, are actually being controlled by the one who IS control. JESUS is in charge here! “Let the Scriptures be fulfilled!”

One person says, “Let us rest our souls on the thought, that all around us is ordered and overruled by God’s almighty wisdom. The course of this world may often be contrary to our wishes. The position of the Church may often be very unlike what we desire. The wickedness of worldly men, and the inconsistencies of believers, may often afflict our souls. But there is a hand above us, moving the vast machine of the universe, and making all things work together for His glory. The Scriptures are being ...fulfilled.” (Ryle, 323)

Listen, this is why you don't have to worry about the outcome of Tuesday. I know we say it, but are our hearts affected by it? It was planned from before the foundation of the world who will win this next election. God is ultimately in charge.

And Jesus knows it. That's why he says to those who seize him, "Let the Scriptures be fulfilled." What Scriptures? Well, he just said, "Why are you coming at me like I'm a robber?" And we know he gets crucified with robbers. So he could be referring to Isaiah 53:12, "he was numbered with the transgressors."

But it could also be a reference to the Scripture he said would be fulfilled at this time. Remember what he said earlier this night? He told his disciples, "You all will fall away, FOR it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.'" That's a quote from Zechariah 13:7. And it's no coincidence that, just after Jesus said, "Let the Scriptures be fulfilled," it says in [v50].

He alone. He's all alone. They all left him! Why? No doubt the intensity of the situation incited an unbearable fear. But that's not the emphasis of this passage. The emphasis is NOT: "The reason why all the disciples abandoned Jesus is because it was such a scary situation! They trembled for their very lives!"

That's true. That's just not the focus Mark wants us to have. The reason given in this passage for why they fled is this: that the Scriptures would be fulfilled. This means Jesus resolved to be condemned, NOT JUST as a robber, but he resolved to be condemned alone. And this point is further reinforced as we move to the final movement of this account...

### **The New Setting: A Man Flees Naked**

I wonder if you were wondering what these last few verses have to do with anything. [vv51-52]

What in the world is this about? Is this just some random detail thrown in to make us blush a little? Who is this guy? One person said, here we have "the first recorded streaker in history." (Edwards, 440)  
What's this about?

When we read these verses in context, it's not too difficult to discern their significance. Think about it, Mark just said all the disciples fled. And now we have this young man fleeing. In fact, the words "ran away" in v52 is a translation of the same in v50 that says "they all...fled."

So this is clearly highlighting the intensity of this moment, and the fear that overwhelmed all who were there. But even more, this is reemphasizing the plight of Jesus. He's alone. No one is staying by his

side. In fact, those who flee believe it's better to be without clothes, if it means getting away from where Jesus is!

This is the new setting for Jesus. One person says, "From now on Jesus will be in the company not of his supporters...but of his enemies." (France, 590) He's left all alone.

### **Conclusion**

And listen: This was his intent! "Let the Scriptures be fulfilled! Let it happen! This is why I came! I came to die alone!" But why? Remember what I said at the beginning? Jesus took upon himself the curse of sin, one of which is eternal loneliness! That's what hell is—it's eternal separation from God. It's described in the Bible as "outer darkness." And Jesus willingly experienced the curse of sin FOR US.

[Gospel—appeal to non-Christians]

This is why you can now bank on promises from God like, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

...because Jesus was forsaken! I know it's difficult to feel alone. But listen, if you're a Christian...YOU ARE NOT ALONE, and YOU WILL NEVER BE ALONE. Jesus, by his Spirit, is with you...and for all eternity, we'll be with him.