

# Matthew 26:31-56

## “The King’s Sorrow”

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**Intro.** There is a struggle to remain submitted to God as pressure increases. Imagine a volleyball on top of the surface of a pool. It is easy to control the ball on the surface. The further the ball goes under water, the greater the pressure, and the ball wants to pop out. The Greek term *hupomone* (*hupo* under + *meneo* remain) relates to steadfast, constant, endurance. In the NT it is the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and righteousness by even the greatest trials and sufferings. It is the example of Jesus.

**Subject:** Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

**Object:** Pray to remain faithful to God

**Context:** Jesus and His disciples have just shared the Passover meal and the Lord’s Supper or communion. As they made their way to the Mount of Olives and Garden of Gethsemane just east of Jerusalem, Jesus was hours from the cross.

**A. Jesus knows I will struggle to remain faithful [31-35]**

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ <sup>32</sup> But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.” <sup>33</sup> Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.” <sup>34</sup> Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you that this night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” <sup>35</sup> Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And so said all the disciples.

Jesus predicts that all the disciples will stumble or fall away that very evening because of His arrest [31]. He quotes from Zechariah 13:7 as prophecy that the disciples will scatter like sheep when He their Shepherd is afflicted. Jesus then assured them that He would be raised and would go before them to Galilee [32]. Thus, despite His imminent suffering and death He was fully Sovereign. Peter declares that even if all the others flee that he will not stumble [33]. In one sense Peter’s loyalty is commendable, but most importantly it reveals foolish pride. Jesus had just foretold that *all* would stumble, and that includes Peter. Yet, somehow Peter believes that he is an exception, because of his personal fortitude. Jesus predicts that Peter will deny Him three times before the rooster crows or dawn. Peter, again vehemently asserts that Jesus is wrong and that he will never deny Jesus, even if he has to die with him. And that attitude was contagious as all the other disciples affirm that they will not scatter, or deny Jesus no matter what happens [35]. It is helpful for me to remember that whenever I’m arguing or disagreeing with Jesus that I’m wrong not Him. It is our nature, like Peter and the disciples, to tend towards religious pride.

**We tend to think we are more submitted to God than we likely are.** We tend to think that Christ's warnings are for others or that they are not that important to our lives and well-being. As I read this account I wonder, "What might cause me to deny Jesus as my Lord?" It is our tendency, when the pressure intensifies, to move away from His authority.

## **B. Jesus reveals the need for prayer to remain submitted to God [36-46]**

**<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." <sup>37</sup> And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. <sup>38</sup> Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." <sup>39</sup> He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." <sup>40</sup> Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? <sup>41</sup> Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." <sup>42</sup> Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." <sup>43</sup> And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup> So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. <sup>45</sup> Then He came to His disciples and said to them, "Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup> Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."**

Gethsemane means oil press [36]. When Jesus was pressed, what came out was perfect submission to the Father. The Mount of Olives had groves of olive trees, and the olives were pressed for their oil that was used for lighting, cooking, and medicine. The Passover occurs on a full moon so imagine the area lit by the moon. Jesus encouraged most of the disciples to remain while he prayed a short distance away [36].

Jesus took Peter, and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John with Him. They appear to be his three closest friends. They were the only disciples with Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration [Mt. 17:1], and at Jairus' home when Jesus raised his daughter from the dead [Lu. 8:49]. Each of these special encounters with Jesus was intended to encourage them, strengthen their faith, and prepare them as disciples who would influence others. And Jesus began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed [37-38]. Jesus is contemplating taking the sin of the world upon Himself [2Cor. 5:21]. In His sorrow, Jesus seeks the support and prayers of His friends. Jesus goes a little further and falls on His face in prayer to His Father [39]. Mark tells us that Jesus prayed, "Abba" which would be our equivalent of papa or daddy [Mk.14:36]. Jesus prayed, "if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." The cup refers to the suffering of becoming sin for us. The essence of Jesus' prayer is, "If there is any other way for mankind to be reconciled to God let it happen, but Father I'm submitted to your will." In the most intense pressure, beyond anything that we could imagine, Jesus prays to be strengthened to remain under His Father's authority. It was to save us from our sin, by taking the penalty we deserved, that Jesus came into our world [Mt.1:21, Jn. 12:27]. Then He found Peter, James and John sleeping, and said to Peter, "What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? How humbling, especially after Peter's bravado that he would never fail Jesus. How humbling for me to contemplate how many times that Jesus has thought of me, and thought couldn't you pray with Me for one hour.

**Jesus exhorts them to watch or be spiritually alert and to pray or they would enter into temptation**

### **[41]. The temptation is to deny Jesus, not His existence, but His Lordship or authority in your life.**

The power to overcome that temptation is recognizing your dependence upon God through prayer. Our flesh is weak, and we need God's Spirit to strengthen us to overcome [41]. Then Jesus returns to prayer and seeks to be strengthened to submit to the Father's will in this most difficult of circumstances [42]. Jesus found the disciples asleep a second time, and for a third time repeats his prayer [43-44]. Jesus found the disciples asleep a third time and He woke them because the hour of His betrayal had come [45-46]. Jesus shows us the necessity of prayer through His example, and His exhortation. We see a lifestyle of intimate and intense prayer that prepares Jesus for this greatest challenge. We don't want to limit our prayer life to crisis management, but regularly recognize our dependence upon God through prayer.

### **C. Jesus remains faithful in the greatest trials and sufferings [47-56]**

**<sup>47</sup> And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. <sup>48</sup> Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him."**

**<sup>49</sup> Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. <sup>50</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. <sup>51</sup> And suddenly, one of those *who were* with Jesus stretched out *his* hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup> But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" <sup>55</sup> In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. <sup>56</sup> But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.**

Judas betrayed Jesus, and a large mob with swords and clubs sent by the religious leaders came to arrest Him [47]. The signal to identify Jesus was a kiss from Judas [48]. Thus, Jesus looked like the common man. Jesus refers to Judas as "friend" because Jesus loved Judas despite knowing that he is betraying Him [50]. Matthew tells us that one of the disciples drew his sword to protect Jesus. John tells us that it was Peter, and his courage is commendable. Jesus intervened, and healed the servant's ear. Jesus reminds His disciples that His way was not by force. Violence begets violence [52]. He could summon an army of angels, the greatest fighting force imaginable [2 Ki.19:35], if He desired to fight, but He had come as prophesied to give His life not to fight to preserve it [54]. **Jesus had the ability to avoid His suffering, but submits to the Father's will.** The mob fulfilled what the prophets foretold [Is. 53:12]. And then as Jesus predicted all the disciples forsook him and fled [56]. All of this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled [56]. I look at Jesus and realize how my prayer life needs to grow. I want to heed His warnings, follow His example, and avoid the pain to myself and others that I influence that result from denying Him. I want to be faithful to my God.

## **Study Guide Qs**

***Q1. What might be some circumstances that would cause Jesus' followers to struggle to remain under His authority? Consider in the personal, marriage, family, career, calling, and community realms.***

***Q2. What have you learned about prayer from this study? How would you like to apply what you learned to your life?***

***Q3. Plan to spend more time than usual praying with your group this week. At the conclusion let people share how they felt about the experience.***

## **Digging Deeper**

**1. This week, spend an hour praying. Journal about your experience. What did you learn about God, prayer, and yourself?**

**2. Read the following passages related to prayer: Heb. 5:7, Lu. 6:12, Mk. 1:35, Lu. 3:31-32, Mt. 14:23 and Lu. 5:15-16. What do you learn about Jesus, and prayer. How would you like to apply those lessons to your life?**

**3. Read John 17. This is Jesus' longest recorded prayer in the Scriptures. Since this prayer is uttered hours before the cross it likely reflects some of the most important issues to Jesus.**

**What do you learn about prayer, and Jesus' priorities? How can you apply what you learned to your life?**