

Gospel of Mark: Jesus Submits to Death

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Date: 17 November 2013

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[0 : 00] Our first reading is in Jeremiah chapter 25, which is on page 784 in the Red Bibles, the Church Bibles.

That's Jeremiah chapter 25. And just starting in verse 15.

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me. Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them. So I took the cup from the Lord's hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink it.

And just further on in verse 27. Then tell them, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says.

[1 : 03] Drink, get drunk and vomit and fall to rise no more because of the sword I will send among you. But if they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, tell them, this is what the Lord Almighty says.

You must drink it. See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that bears my name. And will you indeed go unpunished? You will not go unpunished.

For I am calling down a sword upon all who live in the earth, declares the Lord Almighty. The second reading is Mark chapter 14 and verse 32.

They went to a place called Gethsemane and Jesus said to his disciples, sit here while I pray.

He took Peter, James and John along with him and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, he said to them.

[2 : 29] Stay here and keep watch. Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if it was possible, the hour might pass from him.

Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet what I will, but what you will.

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Simon, he said to Peter, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.

Once more, he went away and prayed the same thing.

Then he came back and he again found them sleeping because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

[3 : 31] Returning the third time, he said to them, are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! Enough! The hour has come. Look!

The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go. Here comes my betrayer.

Amen. Well, we're going to be continuing to look at our studies in Mark's Gospel, chapter 14, verses 32 to 42.

This is the final few days, the final few hours of Jesus' life before his death. And we focus in here this morning on his prayer to his father.

So, please follow along. I think there's sheets have already been passed out. If you want to take notes, feel free to do that. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, please help us as we look at your word together.

Help us, as it were, to be almost as if we're in that garden, watching and listening and knowing all that is going on.

[5 : 23] And as we watch Jesus and as we listen to his words, help us to see how this affects us and how this can also change us.

Father, we ask for the help of your Spirit to be at work amongst us so that we will not leave without an encounter with Jesus in this garden.

We pray for your help in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I don't know how to say this. I'm just really not sure anymore. I just don't think I can go through with this. I'm beginning to have second thoughts. Have you ever been there? Maybe you've been preparing to start a new job which means your family are having to move.

[6 : 47] Or perhaps you've been planning to get married. Everything is set. Everything is in place. And then you begin to have second thoughts.

I don't think I can go through with this anymore. Well, in our text this morning, Jesus is having major second thoughts.

All through the Gospel story, through Mark, he's been planning and preparing for his death. In fact, three times he's told us explicitly that he must die and rise again because that is why he has come. But now, with only hours to go and with the reality of death facing him, Jesus begins to have second thoughts. I don't think I can go through with this.

And from this inner battle, as we enter into the garden with Jesus, we see him having this inner battle. And there's three things we're going to learn from it.

[8 : 03] First, the agony of the cross. Second, the temptation at the cross. And then third, the power in the cross.

So the agony, the temptation, and the power that comes from the cross for us. So first, let's witness Jesus and the agony of the cross.

Verse 32, they went to a place called Gethsemane and Jesus said to his disciples, sit here while I pray. He took Peter, James and John along with him and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

Now this is not the Jesus that we have come to know through the story of Mark's Gospel. Do you remember back in chapter 4 when Jesus was in the raging storm on the lake and all those around him were thinking we're going to drown?

Where was Jesus? He was completely calm and at peace. So at peace he was asleep. And then do you remember in chapter 5 when the man with the evil spirit who no one could control or tame came running at Jesus but yet he was in complete control and without fear?

[9 : 27] That's the Jesus we know but now look at him here. Verse 34, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

What's happened to the God man who had confronted death and faced evil with such supreme authority and absolute power? People had been following Jesus and watching Jesus they stood in wonder at his awesome brilliance as the dead were raised to life and the demons were silenced. And now we see the master and the creator of the universe is reduced to a physical and a spiritual wreck. He's displaying all the signs of a mental and emotional breakdown.

Look at verse 34, my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. The very thought of what is ahead of me is killing me.

I can't do it. Why is Jesus so distressed? Well, Jesus knows that his death is only a few hours away.

[10 : 46] In fact, he's been reminding us of what his death is going to be like. He's told us he's going to be flogged, he's going to be beaten, he's going to be tortured, he's going to be crucified on a cross.

So perhaps it's the thought of facing this physical pain that he's beginning to crack. But you know what, that's not the reason why Jesus is overwhelmed with sorrow.

Read on, verse 35. Going a little further, he fell to the ground and he prayed that if possible, the hour, that's his death, might pass from him.

Abba, Father, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. The reason for the agony that Jesus is facing is the cup that he must drink.

The prophets in the Old Testament are helpful here. they help us to understand what the cup is. We read from it in Jeremiah. Let's remind us of those words.

[11 : 58] It's on the screen. This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me. Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath or anger and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

And when they drink it, they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them. That's the cup.

It's not literal. It's symbolic. It symbolises God's anger. His just and his fair response to sinful people like you and me.

this is the cup that Jesus must drink. And so as Jesus contemplates and as he thinks about his death that is to come in just a few hours, he's beginning to taste the wrath and the judgment that awaits him on the cross.

And he is overwhelmed with sorrow. Now we might have trouble with this. Anger and judgment they're not the sorts of things we like to associate with God.

[13 : 23] We prefer to think of God as kind of this gentle grandfather overweight figure in his rocking chair loving and kind.

But you know what? Anger can be a very loving and kind response. Just think about it. When you hear the stories of the abuse of little children and the rape of young women how do you feel? When you watch on your television screens villages burning and thousands left homeless because of mindless acts of war and terror what emotion wells up inside of you?

When lives are ruined and innocent people suffer because of the injustice or the act of somebody else what's your response to that? anger is a good and positive emotion.

We all long for justice to be done. We want those who cause such terrible torment and suffering to be held accountable. Anger is a sign that you deeply care.

[14 : 46] anger. But what about me? Is God right to be angry with me?

Well when we look back over the history of this world let's just take the last 50 years the millions of people who have died through genocide the thousands who have been permanently scarred physically and emotionally through terrorism the hundreds of children who each day get trafficked into sexual slavery the individual suffering that goes on within our community caused by fits of rage God sees it all not just the last 50 years but he's seen over the whole sweep of history and he takes it all to heart because this is his world he made it it is his creation these are his people and he loves his people and so his just and fair response to such sinful behaviour is one of anger expressed in his judgment that is good and anything less is to be unloving and unkind or tell me would you just prefer if God turned a blind eye to that act of rape or would you prefer if God just said you know what those people killed over there it doesn't matter would you prefer if

God ignored it all but what about me is God right to be angry with me well when I look back over the history of my short life the hurt that I have caused the things that I have said in temper the actions that I have taken the attitudes and the grudges that I hold then yes God is right to be angry with me you see come back to the text here to the cup it's you and me that should be drinking the cup we deserve it as one writer put it that cup has my name on it and it fits perfectly into the palm of my hands but look in the garden here look who figuratively is holding the cup right now it's

Jesus has taken the cup into his hands and as he stares into that cup as he contemplates the judgment that awaits him at the cross as he thinks about the agony of hell that he must suffer for you and for me he has second thoughts take this cup away from me I'm not sure that I can go through with this I can't do it anymore you see if Jesus doesn't drink this cup then you and I have to drink this cup Jesus faces the agony of the cross and second the temptation at the cross as Jesus begins to taste the judgment that is to come he prays doesn't he verse 35 look at that again he prays that if possible the hour might pass from him surprisingly Jesus this God man with all power and all authority is beginning to feel the strain he's struggling in the face of temptation Jesus is beginning to look for another way out of having to go to the cross verse 36 take this cup away from me everything is possible with you father please if there's some other way I will do it but please do not let me have to face the cross so often we have this image of Jesus don't we as being so strong and so brave calmly facing his mission with a determined resolve to go but that's not the

[19 : 43] Jesus that we have here he's buckling under the weight of temptation ready to give up verse 39 once more he went away and he prayed the same thing three times we're told in the passage that he praised it again and again having to drink this cup is a real inner battle because Jesus knows that to face the wrath of his father will mean separation from the father for him but look what he does look what he says in his struggle under the strain he puts his own desires to one side and he submits to the will of the father look at verse 36 again Abba father everything is possible for you take this cup from me yet not what

I will but what you will not what I want but what you want Jesus says no to the temptation at the cross and he says yes to the agony of the cross Jesus says yes I will drink the cup for you and he drinks it undiluted right to its very dregs so that there is nothing left for you and I to even taste Jesus

takes the cup and as we see Jesus submit and say no to temptation look in contrast here to the disciples they're just like us look at verse 37 here's

Jesus in his agony overwhelmed distressed and troubled verse 37 then he returns to his disciples and he found them sleeping Simon he said to Peter are you asleep could you not keep watch for just one hour watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation the spirit is willing but the body is weak and once more he went away and he prayed the same thing and when he came back he found them again sleeping because their eyes were heavy what do we say in that moment well they didn't know what to say and we don't know what to say you see this is our problem we are so weak that we fall so often we can't even obey in the small things never mind the big things here

Jesus is facing the judgment of God for us and all they have to do is pray they can't even do that and it's the same for us instead of fighting in prayer we just give up in despair just like that but this is nothing new this is the history of the world all the way through it was the problem for the first man and woman do you remember the story Adam and Eve God's first people that he created come back with me in your minds to the garden of Eden we read about it in Genesis chapters 1 to 3 and what do we see in the garden of Eden we remember that God had created a beautiful and a good world a world where they enjoyed God's blessing in a perfect relationship with him there was a world of peace and prosperity and plenty it was wonderful and all they had to do to maintain this order and harmony was just obey

God not to fall but just to say yes to God but we know the story temptation came and under the weight of temptation Adam and Eve collapsed and they disobeyed God and the effects of the fall are all around us we live in a broken and suffering world where there is disorder and destruction and we face death every day their disobedience unleashed a tsunami of sin that has just pounded the shores of our own lives ever since and in desperation we've tried everything we try to push against it we try to hold it back but our efforts come to nothing in fact we soon realise that because you and I also fall into temptation we're just adding to the sin problem that we see all around us we can't do what we're meant to do we keep on failing and so the wave of judgment is upon us now come all the way back to the garden of gethsemane we're in a different place and the focus is on a different man not on

[25 : 33] Adam who disobeyed but the man Jesus Christ here our lives are resting on the choice of one man the salvation of the world is resting on this one man and in the garden temptation comes again but this time it is so different instead of disobeying his father Jesus obeys his father he says not what I will but what you will so as we fall into temptation look at Jesus bowing in submission to his father look at the one here in the garden who fought temptation and who overcame temptation for you and for me look at the one who resisted to the point of death so that we don't have to die but we might live you see at the cross and in this garden

Jesus is taking the cup and he says I will obey the father and I will take the cup for you and for me he drinks the cup of wrath so that we might be able to drink the cup of life and look forward to his new creation a world where there is no more death and no more destruction and no more disorder he does it all for you and for me Jesus said no to the temptation at the cross and he said yes to the agony for us and third the power in the cross because what we want to see here now is that this can change our lives in ways we never thought possible because

Jesus said yes to the agony and because Jesus said no to the temptation this event has power to change our lives here right now it changes us in two ways firstly it helps us say no to temptation because Jesus said yes to the agony of the cross that means we can say no to temptation have a look at Hebrews chapter 4 it's on page 1203 Hebrews chapter 4 Jesus said yes to the agony of the cross which means we can now say no to the temptation in our lives and what do we see here well we see that if our trust is in

Jesus our relationship with him is completely changed and altered we are no longer facing judgment and condemnation instead we have a loving faithful high priest let's read chapter 4 verse 15 for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are yet was without sin he was perfect he didn't fall into temptation in the garden verse 16 let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need we now because of Jesus have access to the risen

Jesus who is in heaven and who pours out his mercy every time we do fall and fail but not only that he pours out his grace into our lives giving us the strength so that we don't have to fall we don't

have to say yes to temptation we can now say no because he gives us the power to say no it changes everything so in the heat and in the battle of the moment we can now go to Jesus and ask him for grace and mercy to help us in our time of need we don't have to say yes we can say no and then second we can say yes to the cross we can say yes to the suffering because

[30 : 52] Jesus said no to the temptation we can say yes to the cross have a look at Mark's gospel chapter 8 verse 34 Mark's gospel chapter 8 verse 34 verse 34 then Jesus called the crowd to him along with his disciples and he said if anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me it's the invitation to come and follow Jesus but he uses the word he says you have to take up your cross in other words if we are going to follow Jesus it's going to be really hard it's going to involve suffering it's going to involve agony and everything inside of us says no

I can't do it it's too hard I can't go the way of Jesus I can't do what he asks me to do but here's temptation he faced the worst agony possible he suffered the worst kind of suffering he suffered on the cross he suffered hell for you and for me so that we can say yes to everything that God asks of us to do we will never have to face the cross like Jesus had to we will never have to face hell and judgment we can now say yes to whatever he asks us to do because we know that in him we have life today and life for all eternity can you see how the cross has power to change our lives by ourselves we can't do it but now we can say no to temptation and we can say yes to the path that he calls us to follow nothing in the world will change you like that only the agony of the cross that Jesus undertook for you and for me and for fighting the temptation so that we can live let's pray together father we confess that as we've gone into the garden and watched Jesus and listened to Jesus we've been made uncomfortable we've seen things about ourselves that perhaps we don't want to see and we see something of your character that we struggle with but yet streaming through it all we see your amazing sacrifice your amazing love in action that your son the Lord Jesus would take the cup help us to see how this changes our lives not just today but for all eternity help us to keep looking to Jesus help us to keep listening to him and father would you now please fill us with your grace and your mercy so that we will say no to the temptations that overcome us help us to say no to sin and help us to say yes to Jesus whatever he may ask of us may we also be able to say not my will but your will be done thank you Jesus thank you Lord Amen