

Mark 14:32-42

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[0 : 0 0] Lord, eyes to see and ears to hear and minds to comprehend what you would speak to us from your word this morning. We ask that you'd bless us with a fresh outpouring of your Holy Spirit and draw us ever closer to you, ever closer to your blessed Son, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. How do you deal with emotions when things are difficult, when bad things happen, either because of what you have done or because of what someone has done to you?

When you're facing difficult situations, how do you approach them, especially when there's a great temptation to compromise your values and your convictions? What do you do? Today, we encounter Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying in his last moments before he is arrested. These are his last, in a sense, free moments before he is taken and arrested. This text, it's short, in a sense it's only 10 verses, but it has been deeply influential in the history of the church, in the prayer life of the church, in the spirituality of the church over the centuries and millennia.

This morning, I mean, it's funny, you know, I jump into the text on usually Monday, and by the time Wednesday rolls around, I have a decent idea of how to approach it.

[1 : 3 8] And sometimes it's very clear and obvious, but there's sometimes, there's a text like this where there's so much to take a look at. We could go in a number of different directions. But for this morning, I'm hoping that the text will help us with two main things and how they relate to prayer.

The first is this, how to make sense of our emotions, our real emotions. How do we make sense of that? And the second thing is, how do we deal with failure and compromise?

So how do we deal with our emotions and how do we deal with failure and compromise? If you would like to grab a Bible, they're at the back. You're not going to interrupt anybody.

Just get up and grab it at any time during the sermon. It'd be a great help if you could follow along with me. But let's just jump right in.

So how does this text help us to make sense of our emotions? Jesus has been focused on the cross. Since chapter one, he's been focused on the cross.

[2 : 3 8] He has been resolutely focused on accomplishing his Father's will, specifically bringing the kingdom of God being at hand with the good news going forth.

This has been Jesus' main aim, and the cross has been what he has been on the journey towards. Nowhere in Mark's ancient biographical account of Jesus' life and ministry do we see him waver, not once.

Jesus is laser-focused as he goes towards the cross. He doesn't express doubt. Nowhere, even when he is confronted by the powerful, does he try to remove himself from the path that he is clearly on.

Jesus is focused. No wavering whatsoever. And Jesus has perfectly accomplished his Father's will thus far. He is not out of bounds. He hasn't slipped up.

He hasn't made a mistake. Nothing about his ministry has been anything less than perfect. Yet here we have Jesus in the garden expressing, in a sense, great doubt.

[3 : 4 7] He, all of a sudden, he breaks composure, so to speak. Shouldn't he be more resolute? Is this a crack in his armor, a show of weakness?

What is happening in this garden scene, in Gethsemane? Let's take a quick look at what Jesus has to say here in verse, we'll jump down to verse 33.

And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch. And going a little further, he fell on his face and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. Is Jesus here, right at the very end, slipping up?

What is happening with Jesus? Is he showing weakness? And I would say, Jesus is in no way showing weakness.

[4 : 46] Especially as we continue on, you'll see. But try not to know the rest of the story. Sit yourself in this scene. Is Jesus showing weakness? And I would say, no, he is not.

This text is a profound insight into how we are to engage with deep anxiety and stress. Because Jesus here, he is making it very clear, the perfect one who is following perfectly the Father, completely in step with the will of God, is expressing anxiety and stress, and yet remains perfect in his resolve.

And it helps us to see that when stress and anxiety come, we aren't expected to put on a stoic demeanor.

We aren't to, in a sense, engage in Zen peace. The Christian faith makes room for anxiety and stress in a very real way. For our Savior himself is going through it in agony.

I mean, he is struggling. He falls on his knees and begins to pray. The Christian life doesn't ask us to bottle up our emotions or to downplay the realities of the situations we face.

[6 : 05] And if you're an emotional person, you're just like, of course, obviously, yes, thank you. But if you're more of a reserved person, this might be a bit of a difficult text.

Because all of us have emotions. How we emote them change from person to person. But it's important that we understand that emotions are very, very important to God.

Why? God created us with tear ducts to experience highs and lows. The tear ducts aren't just for, to protect, you know, crazy six-year-olds from staring at the sun and going blind.

Like, they serve a greater purpose than that. Emotions are part of the human experience and they are not bad. And they are not evil. They're not a sign of weakness.

For the strongest man who has ever walked this earth is profoundly anxious and stressful. And stressed out. So, Jesus is in anguish.

[7 : 08] When we feel it in the text, do we not? Jesus is about to experience a torturous death. But more than that, he's going to experience being forsaken by God the Father.

We'll see this in chapter 15 when he breathes his last. I think it's verse 33. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Jesus is experiencing something more than impending torture and death. He is on the precipice of being forsaken by God the Father. Why? Because he will take on the sins of the world and God will pour his just wrath out upon Jesus so that you and I and all those who put faith in Christ don't have to taste the wrath of God in our lives.

But ultimately, this means that God forsakes Christ so that we don't have to be forsaken. Verses, we'll jump into verse 35.

We'll read it again. And going a little farther, Jesus fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.

[8 : 22] Remove this cup from me. And I'll pause there. Jesus, he is knowing his destiny as he goes to the cross, still does business with God.

He still struggles in prayer in such a way that not only expresses his stress and his anxiety and his agony, but also comes to God in a very personal, relational, deep, trusting, loving way and pleads with him.

In a sense, this also shows us that God isn't fatalistic. That we can wrestle with God, so to speak. We can go do business with God. And it also shows us that when we experience great anxiety, when we experience great pain that is no fault of our own, that it doesn't somehow mean that we are sinning against God.

It does not mean somehow if we don't feel his presence, our lives are out of control. When we don't sense him at all close to us, it's like we haven't heard God's voice maybe ever in our lives, but we just feel a distance.

Our hearts aren't necessarily excited. It doesn't necessarily mean that we are lacking. For Jesus, again, he is perfect in all ways.

[9 : 57] He is the closest with the Father. The Apostle John, in his Gospel account, will, I mean, he records Jesus having this high priestly prayer with the Father, and constantly he says that I and the Father are one.

There is nobody in human history closer to the Father than Jesus. And yet, he feels estranged. He doesn't feel great, and it is no fault of his own.

And that's helpful for us. Because in a society that, whether you emote or not, by and large, we are ruled by our emotions, this is giving us permission to say, no, we don't have to be ruled by our emotions.

We might feel a certain way, but that might not be the reality that is happening. So how does Jesus process and deal with this heavy heart, this agony?

How does he deal with these difficult emotions connected to his impending suffering? And this is a key bit for us this morning. What does he do? He prays.

[11:05] God, the Son of God, fully man, fully God. He goes to the Father in prayer. And he doesn't pray, again, to some far-off, distant God that may or may not care about his situation.

He prays, Abba, Father. This closeness, this relational, intimate, Father-Son relationship. And he connects with him. On one hand, he does business with him. But only insofar as this relationship already exists, he prays to the Father.

Jesus is honest. He's authentic. He lays it bare to the Father. He says, if there is another way forward, please. He says this hour, that this hour may pass.

This hour is the hour that he will go to the cross. When he says the cup that may pass from me, it is the cup of God's wrath. It's a reference to the prophet Isaiah.

But it's this picture of God's just wrath being poured out because of sin and evil and death and despair. And Jesus is being really honest with God.

[12:12] And it means that we can be honest as well. We can be honest. We can tell him, I don't like this. I don't want to face this.

This seems unfair. This doesn't seem right. Why to me? Why not to anybody else? Why to me? We can be honest with God. But Jesus doesn't stop by asking God to simply take away the cup, does he?

Verse 36, remove this cup from me. But what does he say to complete this prayer? Yet not what I will, but what you will. And that's the key bit here. Yes, he asks God the hard questions.

We could ask God the hard questions in our lives and be very open and honest with him. But in the end, like Christ here in the garden, we bend a knee in faith and submission to God, trusting that his will is the best.

And he can see the end from the beginning. And he knows the right way forward for his glory, for our benefit. And this, by the way, in a sense, submitting to God's will is not an admission of weakness.

[13:26] Again, Christ is doing it right here, and he is not weak in the slightest. And I think, in a sense, the self-made man or woman is what, I don't want to say in just a sweeping generalization of our culture, because I don't, I think there's so many subcultures.

But by and large, a self-made man is held to a very high esteem. And yet, here, true strength is in weakness and in trusting in the Lord.

Bending a knee to the Father somehow is this beautiful example of strength. And remember, Jesus is about to have the cup of God's wrath poured out upon him, and he seeks God's face.

He's 100% authentic to how this agony is affecting him, this stress, this pain. And yet, he still prays for God's will to be done.

It's remarkable. It truly is remarkable. The cost of dealing with sin and defeating death can only be paid with the life of the incarnate God, fully man, fully God.

[14:38] It's, if you just, if you consider that Jesus, knowing all things, requests from the Father that there be another way, and clearly the answer is no, this is the only way.

It also goes to show us how grievous our sin is. And not just our sin, the sin of the world, but our sin. About how the hang-ups and the compromises and the failure to stand strong when temptation comes, the lies, the cover-ups, I mean, do a self-inventory, you'll see.

But these things were so grievous that it could not be dealt with another way. That the only way that satisfied justice and also to have a beautiful, wonderful picture of mercy was Christ himself dying on the cross in our place.

There was no other way. Not my will be done, but yours. This is the Father's will. And Jesus comes to this reality through earnest and honest prayer.

It's a beautiful picture of what this relationship with God the Father ultimately looks like and what it's about.

[16:01] But what about the disciples? See, we can talk about Jesus and how he's our example, and he certainly is. But when we try to place ourselves in the story, surely we are in the boots of the disciples.

So what about them? They are exhorted by Christ to pray, and they fail miserably. Look with me here. Down to verse 37.

And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Interestingly, how he uses Peter's original name, Simon.

Peter is this picture of a rock. Jesus renames Simon. He is Peter upon this rock. I will build my church. It is this incredible name change in the scripture.

But Jesus says here, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not pray? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

[17:05] Jesus isn't looking for the disciples to pray for him. He is encouraging the disciples to pray for themselves. Because Jesus is facing the cross, but they are also facing temptation.

And it's a real temptation. At the end of the Olivet Discourse in chapter 13, Jesus ends with watch and pray, and the disciples are missing it. Missing it time and again.

We can often fail to pray, or if we do pray, we do so in a way that does not move us to trust in Christ.

But in a sense, oftentimes, I'll speak for myself, oftentimes it satisfies a Christian guilt. I need to pray. I'm a Christian. Jesus has eternal salvation for me on the cross.

I should pray. And you run through, if you do the daily offices, or you have your own kind of set way of praying, not every single time of prayer is this, if you pray, if you remember, is this warm, incredible, intimate connection with God.

[18:13] You kind of run through it. And I would just say, by the way, if that happens here and there, if that's, you know, what ends up happening, say, three, four times out of ten, then still pray, still get in that habit, still lean into the reality and the truth that you are a child of God, and that it is a privilege to pray, whether you feel warm to it or not.

But all too often, we fail to pray. And notice what Jesus says about prayer. He says in verse three, Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. Prayer is so vital for the Christian life. Why? Well, first and foremost, because it helps us to connect with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

It is a huge privilege to pray and to be heard by God. But also, it helps us to avoid a spiritual stupor that often results in a kind of narcissism, that on one hand can take the form of a puffed up self-love, but on the other hand, a spiraling self-hatred.

It's always interesting that pride goes both ways, either puffed up or super low. And prayer, prayer in essence helps us to remember that it is by God, and God alone, through Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, that we are saved, that we have the strength to do what he has called us to do, and it gives him the glory.

[19:48] It removes us, in a sense, from the throne of our own lives, and puts God where he ought to be. Prayer is vital for the Christian life, and it's no surprise that Peter, James, and John, but especially Peter thumps his chest just the moment before they get to the garden.

I swear to God I will follow you to the grave, Peter says. And here he falls asleep three times, which is interesting because when he is about to deny Christ, he will deny him how many times?

Three times. Yeah, that's right. It's a deep connection between this, on one hand, this slumber, this tiredness, and a spiritual tiredness.

And you could say, okay, I mean, he just ate the Passover meal. It's a big meal. Four cups of wine, maybe more. Wine, a lot of food. They mix. It's nighttime. What do you expect?

He's going to fall asleep. This is what's happening here. Jesus is pointing out that they are spiritually in a stupor. They are not sober.

[20:58] In their life. Can we not relate to this? Very interesting. Jesus, in a very kind way, but a direct way, points out to them that temptation is on the doorstep, that they want to follow him, but their flesh is just so weak, and that compromise is going to come.

All too often, compromise is something that we face, and it's a very difficult thing. So we're tempted to compromise, and in my studies, I thought it was an excellent, so I'll just quote it kind of verbatim

in one of the commentaries I used.

Temptation is an invitation to be untrue to God. I think that's a very wise way to look at it. Because being true to God is to be untrue to our selfishness, and to not trust in our own strength, but in his. So we have these conflicting desires, right? Friday, Friday, I had a chance to give kind of like my preliminary thoughts of this to the Parliamentary Hill Fellowship, which I've never, well, once before, but never preached there, and it was a cool bit, but you know, I talked about compromise, and on the Hill, I mean, compromise if you're a Christian is like a daily thing, potentially, right?

For the sake of politics and saving face or PR, whatever, we can compromise. They can compromise. But in our own lives, you know, even if we're working from home, and we don't see our coworkers, and we don't necessarily have to, we're not faced with this, do I follow Christ or do I follow the flesh?

[22 : 44] We still have constant, daily opportunities to compromise. Temptation is, is, is, it's a part of all of our experience.

experiences. But here's the thing. Peter, Peter fails in the most miserable way, precisely because he is not praying and trusting in the Lord, but trusting in himself.

For the third time thus far, Simon Peter will play the fool. And this leads to our second point here, how this text will help us to see that compromise compromise and sin are, are indeed a human problem, but they're not the end of the Christian.

So how do we deal with failure and compromise? Because we're bound to do it. So Peter, he, this is at least the third time, he plays the fool. Right? He claims that he will follow Christ, or he has this insight, and, and he is constantly showing himself to be quick to speak, but not quick to think.

This is his hallmark. Remember, just moments before, beating his chest, I swear I will go to the grave before I deny you. But, he doesn't.

[24 : 03] Three times. He will, he will deny Christ, and then at the end of all of this, when he hears the rooster crows, he breaks down and weeps, the text says.

We'll look at that in a few weeks. But he breaks down and weeps. And I'm thinking, okay, pause there. My goodness. Where's the redemption for this man? But here, here's the wonderful thing here.

Peter, just a few decades later, will pen this. A completely changed man. Well, I'll just read it from my, my notes. A completely changed man. Peter will, will pen this.

First Peter, chapter four, verses seven and eight. And then again in 12 to 14. The end of all things is at hand. Therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.

Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. I'll read verse 12. Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trials when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

[25 : 04] But rejoice, insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

Are we talking about the same person? Like, Peter, he, he doesn't stay awake. He is not sober for the sake of his prayers. He, he does not glory in, in suffering for Christ.

What does it say in verse 14? If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed. He denies Christ three times. Who is this man who is penning this? Is this the same Peter?

Maybe there's two Peters. There's not two Peters. This is the same Peter. These words of Holy Scripture, which Peter wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are the complete opposite of what he did in our text in chapter 14, in our text today, our text last week, our text to come.

This is not the same Peter. It's remarkable. But how is it possible for a man to compromise and sin and to give in to temptation in such a way?

[26 : 11] How is this possible? Remember Mark chapter 14, just last week, Jesus said to his disciples, you will all fall away for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

Verse 28, but after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. The risen Lord Jesus Christ, he restores Peter in the most miraculous way that lifts him up from the very depths of despair, of despondency, of failure.

When we compromise, and compromise, I don't want to downplay it, I don't want to downplay sin and giving in to temptation, because it is grievous, but it is not too grievous for Christ.

He can redeem and restore all people. When you mess up, when you give in, it is not the end of your story. What do you do? Peter didn't do the greatest thing.

He just continued to spiral down. Throw yourself at the foot of the cross, at the mercy of God. Throw yourself at Christ. Be open and honest and authentic with your prayers.

[27 : 19] I have sinned. I mean, the Collect for Purity that we read every morning on, in the, or every Sunday, what does it say? Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.

Can we hide our thoughts? Can we hide our sins? Can we hide our desires from God? Share it with him. Tell him exactly what is up.

Be honest with him. It is a remarkable thing that Peter is restored in the way that he is. So let us, friends, continually throw ourselves at the mercy of the one who did not compromise when facing temptation to avoid God's will.

Jesus did not compromise, but he knew we would. Let's throw ourselves at him, at the one who submitted fully and wholly to the will of God, who defeated sin and death forever at the cross of Calvary.

It's a beautiful, beautiful thing. And I'll just end with one thing. As we consider the grand narrative of Scripture, we see there's types and antitypes and symbols and allusions and prophecies that go from the Old Testament to the New and we see that there are, although dozens of books written by different authors, different genres over the centuries, there is this consistent narrative throughout the Scriptures and this is one of them with the garden.

[28 : 49] When do we see the first instance of the garden in Scripture? It's the Garden of Eden, right? And in that scene, Adam, the first man, he doesn't bend a knee to God. He doesn't trust in the Lord.

He doesn't say, not my will be done, but yours. Instead, he says, my will be done. It's kind of like Peter. He thumps his chest a bit. And what happens?

Sin and death and despair and brokenness enter into the human experience. But at the second garden, the Garden of Gethsemane, we see the second Adam, the greater Adam.

He bends his knee to the Father. He says, not my will be done, but your will. And what is the result? It is healing and it's blessing and it's forgiveness of sin and salvation extended to all.

But there is still a third garden that we see in Scripture. And it's in Revelation chapter 22. And it's subtle, but it's certainly there. And this is what it says in verses 1 and 2.

[29 : 50] Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life bright as crystal flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

This is a picture of the new heavens and the new earth, the new Jerusalem. So also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit yielding its fruit each month.

The leaves of the trees were for the healing of the nations. The tree of life was in the garden. The tree of life is in the new heavens and the new earth and it's an allusion to a garden.

That in the garden to come for all those that are welcomed into eternity with God the Father through God the Son by way of God the Holy Spirit, we get to enjoy the end of all despair and brokenness where temptation is a thing of the past.

No temptation. Opportunities to compromise will be absent. Only enjoyment of God and giving Him glory forever will be our destiny.

[30 : 56] And all of our hopes and all of our longings will be found satisfied in Him. all because Jesus in the garden He bends His knee to the Father and He accomplishes the Father's will and drinks the cup that was meant for us.

Beautiful, beautiful thing that we see Christ do. Let us pray. Lord, we thank You that we have this beautiful story of the garden and how Your Son facing great anxiety and pain and agony He is honest on one hand with the reality of it but He entrusts Himself to You and Lord, help us to be people that grow in prayer as an expression of our relationship that You have extended to us.

Lord, help us to be people that grow in our trust in You and when we end up failing and falling and giving into temptation and compromising our faith when we do that we won't be slow to come to You but we will throw ourselves at the foot of the cross that we will seek Your face that we will confess our sins and pray that we may be healed.

So Lord, we ask that You'll bolster in us not a great guilt for the sin that we've done although that is very important that we would feel the weight of it but instead a great love and thankfulness for Your

Son who bore the penalty on our behalf.
Amen. Amen.