

# Mark 14:26-52

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's get into it. We are into the passion narrative now of Mark's gospel. When it comes to the cross, artists and filmmakers usually focus on the physical suffering of Jesus.

Like, best example is probably Mel Gibson's *The Passion*. But the New Testament writers actually give very little attention to that aspect of the whole thing.

In the next chapter of Mark, Mark simply says, they crucified him. That's it. It's a very economic retelling.

There's no mention of any physical agony. There's no gory details. What the Bible does emphasize, though, is the huge mental and emotional cost to Christ.

And this really comes across in our passage this morning. So that's where we're going to start. Look at what was happening in the mind and the heart of Jesus the day before the crucifixion.

[ 1 : 13 ] And we'll do that because it tells us something really important about the meaning of the cross. Verse 33. So we're in Gethsemane, which is probably an olive tree grove.

And it seems like as Jesus enters the grove, as he enters this garden, the reality of the crucifixion just hits him.

Just slams into him. I remember when my wife, Amy, was pregnant with our daughter, Bea. And the doctors told us that there was about a 30% chance that she wouldn't survive the womb.

Her heart. Her heart was too damaged. And for the rest of the pregnancy, I would just periodically, I would just fall apart. I'd be just doing something normal, like I'm washing the dishes.

And then I'm just on the floor. And I'm just weeping and weeping. I don't know if you've ever had any sort of experience like this in your life. But grief can sometimes just, it can just blindsides you.

[ 2 : 43 ] And this scene in Gethsemane, it has that sense. I mean, look at the words used to describe the state Jesus was in. Distressed, troubled, very sorrowful, even unto death.

Jesus was experiencing anguish so deep. It felt like the stress alone could kill him. Now, you might be thinking, you might be thinking to yourself, other people seem to have faced death a bit better than Jesus.

I mean, there are lots of stories of Christian martyrs who seemed a bit braver than Jesus when the end came. So what's happening with Christ here?

Why was he so troubled? Well, there are two reasons. The first minor reason, the first minor reason is that he is, he's fully human.

As well as being fully God, he is fully human. So partly, he was experiencing our natural desire to escape pain. And we all have that.

[ 3 : 54 ] We all have this instinctive reflex to fear pain, to want to avoid pain. I remember years ago going to the doctor because I'd caught a finger, the tip of my finger, there was this finger here, the tip of my finger in a door, not in the handle end, in the hinge end of the door.

I know, I know. So what had happened is like blood had pooled, had pooled under the nail and it couldn't escape. So it was just this throbbing agony.

So I go to the doctor and I show my finger and I explain what happens. And he said, that must have hurt. And we agree on that. And he then, without saying a word, he pulls out a Bunsen burner.

Do you guys want to know what a Bunsen burner is? A Bunsen burner and a paper clip. And he says, this is a true story. He says to me, I've always wanted to try this.

This is a true story. This is New Zealand, by the way. It's happening in New Zealand. We're just barbarians, you know.

[ 5 : 03 ] So he bends the end of the paper clip out. So he's got like a handle end and like a stabby end, right? And then he holds it over the tip of the Bunsen burner until it's flaming red hot.

Paper clip's flaming red hot. And he just says nothing to me. Just says nothing to me. It's just like cooking the end of this paper clip. And then I decide to break the silence. And I say, is this going to hurt?

And he says to me, and there's a lot of doctors in this congregation that know that. He lies to me. He lies to me.

And here is the lie he says to me, which you doctors all know. Because you've said it. I say, is this going to hurt? And he says, you may experience. Some level of discomfort.

During this procedure. Which I discovered later. Is kind of like telling somebody that's standing in the path of a tsunami.

[ 6 : 07 ] That they're about to experience some moisture. All right? So I put my hand. He says, put your hand down on the table, son. Put my hand down there. He puts his hand on top of mine.

Puts all his weight on it. Because he knows if I get the chance, I'm going to clock him and get out of there. Like, I'm going to do a runner. And then he drives the red hot poker through the top of my fingernail. And all the blood comes bursting.

Psh! Psh! Psh! Psh! So there's slight exaggeration at the end there. See, I'm looking out at your faces.

And you can't even hear a story about pain right now. Let alone going through it, right? Like, we're human beings. We recoil from pain. We hate pain. And Jesus was fully human.

So, of course, one reason he was stressed out is there was a lot of pain coming down the road. But that was not the big reason for his anguish.

[ 7 : 08 ] In fact, the physical pain was like a flea bite compared to what he would go through spiritually on the cross. Like, what he would go through, no one has ever faced before.

So, what caused him to be so sorrowful, even unto death? And the answer to that question is in his prayers. In his prayers, think about it.

What does Jesus ask to avoid? It's not death. It's not pain. It's not the beatings. It's not the shame. It's not the mockery. Verse 36.

Jesus is terrified of the cup.

Drinking the cup. So, what does that mean? What's the cup? In the Old Testament, the cup is like code word for the judgment of God.

[ 8 : 06 ] Let me read a couple of passages to you. Isaiah 51, 17. Wake yourself, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath and drunk it to its dregs.

Jeremiah 25, 15 and 16. The God of Israel said to me, take from my hand this cup of wine of wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it.

They shall drink it and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I'm sending among them.

So, the cup represents God's anger against evil. So, Jesus' anguish, it's not so much the physical pain he's worried about.

He knows that on the cross, he will drink God's judgment. Now, it's one thing for us to face God and answer for our own mistakes.

Now, imagine doing that for the sins of the whole world. Every crime, every murder, every injury, every exploitation, every theft, every injustice, answering for every human trafficker, every abuser, for every assault.

[ 9 : 20 ] Imagine being the object of God's anger for every thought, word, and deed in the world. That's what God was facing. That's what Jesus was facing on the cross.

He wasn't worried about the nails. But he knew that he would have to drink the cup of God's wrath to the dregs. That's what Jesus feared.

This is what he asks to avoid. Now, we know that Jesus actually did go through with the cross. And given the magnitude of it all, how does he do it?

Like, how does he pull that off? How does he allow himself to be arrested? How does all of that happen? Think about it. Christ had the right not to get killed.

But he allowed it to happen. He let it willingly happen. How did he steel himself? How did he find the strength and the focus?

[ 10 : 20 ] And the answer is this. It's very simple. He prays. He prays. That's why he goes to the garden. It's very clear.

Verse 32. And he said to the disciples, sit here while I pray. He didn't go to Gethsemane to have one final night out with the boys, you know. He goes to the garden to tell his disciples to watch and

pray so he can go off and pray for himself.

In Mark's gospel, there are three times Jesus goes off to pray by himself in some remote spot. The first one's in Mark 1. He's been healing all day.

There's this huge crowd. They find out about this. This huge crowd gathers around the house where he's staying. There's all these people there. Big crowd with real needs. Jesus goes off into the wilderness and he prays.

And he comes back and he says, right, we're leaving. We're getting out of here. We're going to go to the next town to preach because that's why I came. And it was a shock. The disciples are going, oh, you're ruining everything. This is terrible.

[ 11 : 22 ] What's going on here? But it seems that Jesus was tempted here to do what he did for a few people to everyone. And as great as that sounded, it wasn't the mission.

So in prayer, Jesus steals his focus. This happens again in Mark 6. He's just fed 5,000 people. That's pretty awesome.

That's a great ministry. Christians do that. We should keep doing that. Feed hungry people. But Jesus straight away after feeding 5,000, he leaves and he goes to a quiet place and he prays.

Seems like perhaps another moment of temptation for him. Another moment of decision. He refocuses through prayer on the mission that God has for him.

Those are the first two places. And again, Mark 14 in our passage. Faced with a decision where guidance and resolve was needed, Jesus comes to the Father and he prays.

[ 12 : 22 ] And it's a wonderful prayer. For a start, it's very honest. Lord, if possible, can you take this cup from me? Is there another way to do this? And it's also really humble.

He submits to the desire of the Father's will. I've heard in the past that people say you should never qualify your prayers with the phrase, if it's your will.

Just believe it's his will, whatever it is, and pray. But obviously there are problems there. Because that sounds a bit more like faith in faith than faith in God. I think it's actually great to pray the line, if it's your will, Father.

You don't have to say it every time. But it should be the underlying assumption when we talk to God. Because remember, the purpose of prayer is not to bend God's will to fit what you want.

It's not to bend God's will to fit your desires. The purpose of prayer is to align your will to God's. And that's the fundamental issue of discipleship, isn't it? It's, Father, help me live your will.

[ 13 : 29 ] So, this is how Jesus faces his temptation in Gethsemane. With honest, God-honoring prayer.

And we could probably finish the sermon here. But there's a lot of other stuff in here. Particularly what's really interesting is when we look at how the disciples face their temptation.

Jesus' strategy was coming to the Father in prayer. The disciples' strategy was pride. Their strategy was to will themselves to do better.

Like, it's brilliant. They're hilarious. To will themselves. They just were thinking they could just will themselves to be really great at life.

Verse 31. Jesus says, you will all fall away. And they're like, there's no way. There is no way. Peter even takes them aside. You can imagine putting his arm around Jesus, walking them away and going, look.

[ 14 : 33 ] Maybe some of these other guys. But not me. I would never do that. I mean, I'm Peter. I'm the rock.

As an aside, do you notice that Peter only calls him Simon in this passage? So, Peter is just full of beans and gusto. And then Jesus gives him this very specific kind of prophetic word.

He says, before the rooster crows three times, you, Peter, who's just said you would never deny me, will deny me. You will deny me. Which is actually way worse than the other guys who just sort of hid.

So, what's the big issue here? The big issue is Peter did not know his own heart. He didn't realize his own capacity for cowardice. He was spiritually overconfident.

And that leads to bad decisions. You know, when it comes to facing challenges in your life, relying on your own sunny opinion of yourself, instead of relying on God, instead of relying on the transformative work on the Holy Spirit.

[ 15 : 36 ] Folks, that's a place of spiritual danger. And that's the trap that Peter fell into. He had just said, he just says, I would rather die than deny you.

He knows a great temptation, a great challenge is coming down the pipeline. I would rather die than deny you. And then he nods off at the first test.

The very first temptation. And it's not even a big test. The first test is just stay awake. I will never fail you, Jesus.

Like, it's almost comical. I can summarize this all by just saying this. Like, presumption is a very dangerous thing in the Christian life. And to dig a little bit deeper in the passage, did you notice that Jesus invites them into the garden?

And then he says to them, watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation. He tells them to go and pray. Not for him. He says, go pray for yourselves. Because a great challenge is coming.

[16:43] And you need to go to the Father and ask for strength. But they failed in their task to watch and pray, which is why they failed later. Which is why they abandoned Jesus later.

They did not bring, they did not bring their hearts to God. They trusted in their own willpower. They trusted in their own sunny opinion of themselves. In our story, it's no coincidence that Peter fell asleep three times.

And then betrayed Christ three times later. Jesus summarizes this all in verse 41 and says, our flesh is weak. We just have to kind of accept that.

It's true, our flesh is weak. So we endure through prayer. It's like when somebody offends you, does something terrible to you.

What do you do? What's our, our inclination is, I mean, we're just so dumb sometimes. Like we just, we rehearse it over and over again.

[17:49] You guys do this? You just rehearse it over and over again in your mind. Or men, I know men, we fantasize about violence when offended. It's terrible.

Let's take these great imaginations of ours. Instead of just rolling it around in our brain all the time. Pour it into prayer. Come to the Father. Ask the Holy Spirit to transform your hearts.

Humans, we are. I mean, we are capable of incredible things. Great goodness. Wonderful things. But we are capable of really stupid things as well. And lots of very cowardly things.

We need to watch and pray. Because no amount of telling yourself, I am good, is going to fix your heart. You need to bring your broken hearts and situations to God.

And ask for transformation and strength and resolve. Let me finish-ish here. You could summarize this passage like this. This passage asks us to believe something and do something.

[18:51] Believe that Jesus took the anger of God on himself so it wouldn't fall on you. And it's amazing to think Jesus did that for us, isn't it? What he did for us. No one loves like Jesus.

You could put it this way. We're so messed up that Jesus had to die for us. But we're so unbelievably loved that he prayed for the courage to do it.

Isn't that wonderful? Now, if you find it hard to believe that God could really love you like this, knowing what he knows about you, remember the story. Jesus sees us at our worst in the garden. Like, we're just at our absolute weakest and worst and most cowardly. There's even a guy in the story who would rather run away naked into the forest than hang out with Jesus at that point. Jesus sees us at our weakest and our most cowardly.

And he still prays for the courage to save us. Those people. No one loves like Jesus. That's what this passage asks us to believe. And what does this passage ask us to do?

[19:53] We need to give ourselves over to daily, regular prayer to steel ourselves to follow Jesus. Watch and pray. Watch and pray, friends.

We're made in the image of God. We can do amazing things, but there is darkness in our hearts and we're almost certainly worse than we think we are. And there are great temptations ahead. So watch and pray.

Watch and pray. For example, you may be tempted to despair in your life, like Christ in our situation. Like I know, I often feel like such a failure as a parent.

And I must take that fear to Jesus and confess and say, Help me, God. Help me trust my children into your safe hands.

You might be tempted to despair about your health, your future. You must come to God with these great challenges and say, Lord, I do not trust you with my health.

[20:58] I do not trust you with my future. Don't just hide that stuff away. Confess it. Bring it to God.

Pray your fears. Take your fears to Jesus. Take them all to him. Amen.