

## Mark 14:32-42

# He Goes to the Garden Alone

Would you like to know your future? There would, no doubt, be benefits to that. Predicting basketball brackets in March would be helpful as would investing in the right stocks. At the same time, knowing impending sorrow would be overwhelming. Jesus, no doubt, knew what awaited him and yet he willingly marched toward Calvary.

The scene opens with **Christ's Sorrow** (vs. 32-34). Shifting from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus pauses to pray. Gethsemane means "olive press" reflecting the prevalence of olive trees. The specific garden was likely privately owned and a common retreat for Jesus. While such gardens were designed for beauty and rest, Jesus is battling Hell.

Accompanied by his inner three (Peter, James, and John), Jesus became "greatly distressed" and "troubled." Facing the certainty of death, the weight of the world's sins upon him, and the abandonment of his friends, the humanity of Jesus is on full display. It is strange how the same man who could cure sickness and calm storms can also suffer so greatly. Although Jesus was no defenseless martyr, he did come to seek and to save others, not himself.

Jesus's sorrow is so extreme he sweats blood (Luke 22:44) and fears despairing "even to death" (vs. 34). Though fully divine, Jesus was equally human which was on full display in the Garden. This is good news. Jesus does not merely stand above us as a divine figure, but with us as a fellow sufferer amid our pain. Long have Christians found comfort in Gethsemane for there they find Christ waiting for them.

Amid his sorrow, we see **Christ's Supplication** (vs. 35-37). It is no accident that Jesus's first response to sorrow was prayer. Prayer allows us to cast our burdens upon the Lord, rest in his sovereign grace, and find comfort. But far too many of us neglect this spiritual discipline. As we gaze upon the Savior, we ought to consider what he teaches us about prayer. First, Jesus shows the *Posture of Prayer*. Scripture describes an abundance of prayer postures including standing, sitting, lifting hands, looking to heaven, and bowing the head. So overwhelmed by the weight he was carrying; Jesus collapsed while crying out to God. Of course, "posture" describes more than the body, but the heart. His physical posture reflects the honesty of his prayers.

Jesus also shows *The Content of Prayer*. His prayer is a bold one. He requests that the cup of God's wrath pass over him. The "Cup" was established earlier in Mark as a metaphor for God's judgment (Mark 10:38). To drink from the cup was to suffer God's wrath which awaited him at the cross.

Finally, Jesus shows us *The Humility of Prayer*. Prayer is, by nature, an exercise of humility. We are approaching the sovereign God confessing our weakness and limitations. Prayer exalts God and humbles us. Jesus began by acknowledging God's omnipotence ("all things are possible for you") and submitting to his divine will ("Yet not what I will, but what you will"). The challenge of prayer is not requests, but submission. It is likely why so many of us abandon it. In prayer, we are seeking the will of God, not telling God how to do his job. Affirm God's power and his goodness. In so doing we can submit in obedience and faith. Remember, it is impossible to listen to God when we tell him what to say. It is difficult to obey the Lord when we tell him what to do.

We finally see **Christ's Strength** (vs. 42). There are two choices regarding despair. Either we can make misery our permanent home or courageously move forward. The latter requires courage. Things like returning to a daily routine, cleaning out that closet, and wrestling with emotions are tough enough. Forgiving those who have hurt us, reconciling with our enemies, renewing our way of thinking, reevaluating our behavior, and readjusting to new realities is more difficult and requires spiritual courage.

Jesus demonstrates that for us. The Disciples are portrayed as weak ("the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak") whereas Jesus, the one agonizing in prayer, is strong. He doesn't run from his arrest, but stands. The man who surrenders to the good will of God is stronger than those who resisted.

This familiar scene, of course, isn't about us. Certainly, there are great applications to gain from it, but we ought to marvel at Christ. It is no accident that this infamous scene takes place in a garden. Scripture opens with one. In Eden, a Cherubim drew a sword to keep humanity out while in Gethsemane, Jesus ordered swords be removed. In Eden, Adam's life began while in Gethsemane, Christ's ended. In Eden, Adam's work broke the world while in Gethsemane, Christ restored it. In Eden, Adam's sin brought sorrow, while in Gethsemane, Christ's sorrow conquered sin. In Eden, Adam is naked and ashamed. In Gethsemane, Jesus is arrested and stripped taking our shame upon himself. In the Eden, Adam enjoyed fellowship with God which he broke by sin, but in Gethsemane, Jesus was broken by sin so we can again enjoy fellowship with God. In Eden, Adam was tested and failed, while Christ was tested and triumphed. Adam step toward the Tree and brought forth death while Jesus stepped toward the cross and brought forth life. Adam prayed, "Not your will but mine be done," but Jesus prayed, "not my will, but yours be done." From Eden, Adam was cursed with sweat upon his brow while in Gethsemane, Christ suffered with sweat drops of blood.

Jesus is the promised Messiah whose suffering cleanses us from sin, conquered death, and crushes the serpent's head. It is no accident that this scene happens in a place called Gethsemane. The ancient Hebrews frequently anointed others with olive oil and yet here, in this Garden, stands *the* Anointed One surrendering to the will of the Father to rescue us.

What Adam lost; Jesus, the Anointed One restored. The last garden mentioned in the Gospels is not Gethsemane, but the empty tomb. Remember how Mary initially confused Jesus with a gardener? The story doesn't end in Gethsemane where the Savior agonized over his impending death. The story of Jesus ends in the empty tomb where Jesus triumphed over the grave.