

**Valley Bible Church**  
**Sermon Notes for January 28, 2018**

**Watch and Pray**  
**Mark 14:32-42**

Background:

- Jesus has been demonstrating His divine nature through His sovereign control and knowledge in recent events
  - Identifies Judas Iscariot as traitor
  - Predicted again His own death for the sake of the New Covenant
  - Prophesied the scattering of the 11, including specifics for Peter
- Now we return to see the humanity of Christ as He turns to His Father in prayer

I. The decision to pray (14:32-34)

*32 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."*

32 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

- Jesus and the 11 were on their way from Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives
  - This required exiting Jerusalem in the East, crossing the Kidron Valley and ascending the Mount of Olives
  - They stopped at the base of the Mount of Olives at Gethsemane
  - Luke 22:39 "And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him."
  - John 18:1-2 "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. 2 Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples."
- "The name means 'oil press,' and referred to a garden filled with olive trees on a slope of the Mt. of Olives."<sup>1</sup>
- Jesus asked the disciples to sit at Gethsemane while He would pray
  - Apparently 8 disciples remained at this particular spot

33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1495.

- Jesus would take the inner three with him away from the 8 that were left to “sit”
  - These three had witnessed incredible moments of Jesus’ divine nature
    - The raising of Jairus’s daughter (5:40)
    - Jesus’ transfiguration (9:2)
  - Now these three will also bear witness to Jesus’ humanity
  - Additionally, these three had at one point or another expressed their willingness to die for Christ
    - James and John back in Mark 10
    - Peter more recently on the way over to Gethsemane
  - Now these three will get a true glimpse into what it means to follow Christ even unto death
- Jesus then became “greatly distressed and troubled”
  - Jesus’ distress and trouble must have been due to the inevitable arrest and death that He knew awaited Him
  - “The Gr. word refers to a feeling of terrified amazement. In the face of the dreadful prospect of bearing God’s full fury against sin, Jesus was in the grip of terror (see note on Matt. 26:38).”<sup>2</sup>

34 And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.”

- Jesus communicated His great distress and trouble to the inner three
- He described His feelings in the way of His soul being sorrowful
- He stated clearly the stress He was under by saying, “even to death”
  - Could mean a couple of things...
  - “Jesus’ sorrow was so severe that it threatened to cause His death at that moment. It is possible for a person to die from sheer anguish (cf. Luke 22:44; see note on Matt. 26:38).”<sup>3</sup>
  - “This expression is most likely a figurative expression of hyperbole, ‘I am very sad,’ with no reference to Jesus’ impending death. He is ‘simply using a common linguistic form to express the depth of his sorrow’ (Culy 2006, 107) much as an English speaker might say, ‘I’m starving/bored/scared to death.’”<sup>4</sup>
- Jesus asked the three disciples to “remain here and watch”
  - Jesus was not merely desiring protection or bodyguards
    - In fact, later in the passage we find that these disciples are to watch or be alert for themselves (for their own sake)
  - Jesus, Himself, was going to pray but the three were also to be alert and watchful by being prayerful

<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1496.

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1496.

<sup>4</sup> Decker, 200.

- “The shift from perfective to imperfect imperative is appropriate: the simple command to stay followed by a command that involves a process (keeping watch). Being watchful and alert requires staying awake (though translating *gregoreo* as ‘stay awake,’ as, e.g., NRSV, ESV, NJB, REB, HCSB, misses the point; for one can be awake but not alert and watchful). The same verb is used three times in the parable of the absent householder (13:34-37).”<sup>5</sup>

## II. The demonstration of prayer (14:35-36)

*35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”*

35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

- Jesus now journeyed not much farther but sufficiently into isolation away from the inner three at this point
  - Luke 22:41 “And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed,”
- Mark tells us that Jesus fell to the ground and prayed
  - This description matches the stress that Jesus communicated to the three
- Mark summarizes Jesus’ prayer as asking for “the hour” to pass from Him if possible
  - The “hour” was in reference to the inevitable suffering that awaited Him
  - Jesus was seeking another option in the plan of God
- The details of the prayer are given for us in verse 36

36 And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

- Why did Mark give us the title “Abba, Father” when recounting this event?
  - “Respectful but intimate Aramaic word for father. Jesus’ addressing God in this way is unparalleled.”<sup>6</sup>
  - “It does not, however, reflect a childish affection, but rather ‘the respectful intimacy of a son in a patriarchal family.’”<sup>7</sup>
  - “In verse 36 *Abba* is an expression of obedient surrender and unconditional faith in the Father.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Decker, 201.

<sup>6</sup> D. A. Carson, “The Gospels and Acts,” in NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2051.

<sup>7</sup> Decker, 202.

<sup>8</sup> Lane, 518.

- Romans 8:15 “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”
- Galatians 4:6 “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”
- Jesus first affirms God’s powerful character
  - “All things are possible for you”
  - “Jesus knew that it was in the scope of God’s power and omniscience to provide an alternate plan of salvation, if He desired (see note on v. 35).”<sup>9</sup>
- Jesus then, makes His request
  - “Remove this cup from me”
  - This must be a reference to the cup of suffering and drinking of the wrath of God
  - “This was the cup of divine wrath referred to in the OT (Ps. 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 49:12). Christ was to endure the fury of God over sin, Satan, the power of death, and the guilt of iniquity”<sup>10</sup>
  - Mark 10:38 “Jesus said to them, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?’”
  - Psalm 75:8 “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.”
  - Isaiah 51:17 “Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl, the cup of staggering.”
  - Isaiah 51:22 “Thus says your Lord, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: ‘Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more’”
  - Jeremiah 49:12 “For thus says the LORD: ‘If those who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink.’”
  - Psalm 60:3 “You have made your people see hard things; you have given us wine to drink that made us stagger.”
- Jesus then surrenders to the will of God
  - “Yet not what I will, but what you will”
  - “Because God’s will perfectly expresses his character, Jesus’ obedience, as God’s beloved Son (cf. 1:10–13; 9:7), means reflecting God’s character. Jesus’ death,

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<sup>9</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1496.

<sup>10</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1496.

then, is a matter not of the Father compelling the Son—an exercise of power wherein God imposes his will on Jesus—but of the Son willingly and intimately embracing and embodying his Abba’s self-giving love. In this sense, Jesus’ profound anguish testifies to the depth of God’s love for his creation.”<sup>11</sup>

- “This reveals Jesus’ total resolution and resignation to do the will of God. He came into the world to do God’s will, and that remained His commitment while here”<sup>12</sup>
  - John 6:38 “For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”
- “Jesus’ desire was conditioned upon the will of God, and he resolutely refused to set his will in opposition to the will of the Father.”<sup>13</sup>
  - Acts 2:22-23 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”
- “Jesus’ appeal to his Father is based on the twin assumptions that on the one hand *panta dunata soi*, but on the other hand God has a will which is to be accepted rather than altered by prayer. It is the blending of these two convictions which gives all prayer its mysterious dynamic, and frustrates any ‘quick-fix’ approach... But it is not for us, or even for Jesus as God’s Son, to assume that the God who ‘can’ answer every request will necessarily be willing to do so. Prayer, so understood, consists not in changing God’s mind but in finding our own alignment with God’s will... It is in Jesus’ instinctive acceptance of this sense of priority that he will find his strength to go through the next twenty-four hours. To that extent, though not in the way he would have wished, his prayer was answered.”<sup>14</sup>

### III. The danger of not praying (14:37-38)

*37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*

37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?

- Jesus then returned to the inner three only to find them sleeping

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<sup>11</sup> D. A. Carson, “The Gospels and Acts,” in NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2051.

<sup>12</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1496.

<sup>13</sup> Lane, 518.

<sup>14</sup> France, 585.

- Jesus woke Peter and blatantly asked, “Could you not watch one hour?”
  - Jesus could have been praying for close to an hour
  - Peter’s claims to follow Christ and not scatter are not seeming very convincing at this point since he is sleep and cannot remain watchful and alert as Jesus called him to do so in the first place

38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

- Jesus then gives more instruction to the inner three than we saw earlier in the passage
  - Jesus commands the inner three to “watch and pray”
    - The command to “pray” helps fill out what it means to be watchful and alert
  - Jesus commands this so that they may not enter into temptation
    - “This Gr. word means ‘to keep alert.’ Jesus was encouraging Peter, James, and John to discern when they were under spiritual attack. They were not to let their self-confidence lull them to sleep spiritually.”<sup>15</sup>
  - Jesus’ was attempting to help the disciples in His own hour of trial!
    - Jesus was not asking these disciples to watch and pray for Him
    - Jesus was asking these disciples to watch and pray for themselves!
    - “The remarkable element in the scene is that in the midst of an unparalleled agony Jesus twice more came to look after his three vulnerable disciples and to warn them of their danger of failure in the struggle which was about to overwhelm them.”<sup>16</sup>
- “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
  - The spirit is willing
    - This is not a reference to the good general spirit, and attitude of man
      - Man does not possess a good general spirit and attitude on his own that propels him toward righteousness or morality
    - This is a reference to God’s own Spirit
      - The Spirit who is ready and willing at all times to draw near and help those who cry out to God for help
      - Ephesians 5:18 “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,”
      - “The ‘willing spirit’ which stands in opposition to the weak flesh is not a better part of man but God’s Spirit who strives against human weakness. The expression is borrowed from Ps. 51:12, where it

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<sup>15</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1496.

<sup>16</sup> Lane, 519.

stands in parallel with God's holy Spirit who qualifies a man to speak with boldness before sinners."<sup>17</sup>

- But the flesh is weak
  - This is not just stating that humans are feeble and fatigued by nature
  - This is stating that human nature is by default sinful
  - Romans 7:18 "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out."
  - Romans 8:8 "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."
  - Jesus reveals the tug-of-war that every disciple encounters
    - Trying to please God in His Spirit on the one hand
    - Still enticed to please the fleshly desires on the other hand
- Prayer is key to thriving in this fight for holiness as we mortify our fleshly lusts

#### IV. The determination from prayer (14:39-42)

*39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. 41 And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."*

39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

- Jesus left a second time to be by himself and pray
- Mark summarizes Jesus' prayer time as "saying the same words"
- Jesus remains steadfast in prayer while the disciples fail to heed His warnings

40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him.

- Jesus, again, finds the inner three sleeping
- Mark describes their eyes as heavy
- Mark also recounts that "they did not know what to answer him"
- These disciples kept falling victim to drowsiness and sleep rather than being watchful and alert in prayer
- They clearly were not convinced of the severity of the situation
- The problem was not the fatigue of the disciples but their conviction of the situation's significance

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<sup>17</sup> Lane, 520.

41 And he came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

- Again, Jesus departed and prayed a third time regarding His inevitable death
- Jesus confronted the inner three again about sleeping
  - The inner three remain unimpressive in their commitment to follow Christ to death as they all continue to fall asleep
  - “The 3 disciples remained indifferent not only to the needs of Christ at that moment, but their need of strength and watchfulness for the impending temptation that all 11 would face. The disciples needed to learn that spiritual victory goes to those who are alert in prayer and depend on God, and that self-confidence and spiritual unpreparedness lead to spiritual disaster.”<sup>18</sup>
- Jesus then told them that their rest was sufficient and enough because the hour had come
  - This was a reference to the time of His betrayal as the end of the verse appears to indicate
- Jesus stated that He, the Son of Man, is being betrayed (present passive) into the hand of sinners
  - The sinners were Judas Iscariot and those he had brought with him to arrest Jesus

42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

- Jesus called the inner three to rise from their sleep
- Jesus called them to go
  - Jesus was not attempting to flee the situation
  - Jesus was resolved to go and meet His betrayer, Judas Iscariot
- “Just as rebellion in a garden brought Death’s reign over man (Gen. 3:1-19), submission in gethsemane reversed that pattern of rebellion and sets in motion a sequence of events which defeated Death itself (cf. Heb. 5:7-10).”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1496.

<sup>19</sup> Lane, 522.