

Mark 14:43-52 “When Life Seems Out of Control”\*\*

Main Idea: At the scene of Jesus’ arrest, life seemed out of control. The Lord experienced three disappointments as recorded in Mark 14:43-52.

I. Jesus was betrayed by a fake follower (43-46).

A. Judas hurt Jesus with destructive deeds (43-44).

1. He led the mob to Jesus (43).
2. He initiated the plot against Jesus (44).

B. Judas hurt Jesus with deceptive words (45-46).

1. He used a word to betray.
2. He used a kiss to kill.

II. Jesus was defended by a fighter (47-49).

A. Peter meant well (47).

B. Peter misrepresented Jesus (48-49).

1. Jesus clarified the truth about Himself.
2. Jesus emphasized His commitment to fulfill Scripture.

III. Jesus was deserted by His friends (50-52).

A. Everyone ran in fear (50).

B. A young man followed for awhile, then fled (51-52).

C. Jesus headed to the cross alone.

Make It Personal: When life seems out of control...

1. God is in control.
2. God is giving us an opportunity to become more like His Son.
3. God invites us to trust Him.

It was one of those days. Do you know what I mean by one of “those” days? You’ve had them, I’m sure.

Jeff (he’s now my brother-in-law but at the time he was dating my sister) was flying in an airplane thousands of feet above ground. He jumped out (with a parachute) and began falling. He happened to be jumping with a partner who left the plane after Jeff and fell through the air and coincidentally slammed into Jeff, knocking him half unconscious. So there he went, free falling towards earth, parachute still unopened. At just the last moment, Jeff opened his eyes, looked at his altimeter, noted his predicament, and reached instinctively to pull the rip cord. The chute opened enough to break his fall and he landed in the middle of a road. Thankfully, no car hit him but the impact did cut his knees, making an emergency room visit necessary and stitches to repair the cuts.

As they left the e-room, his partner said, “You know what you need to do now, don’t you?” He knew. And so they returned to the airport, and headed back into the sky to jump again, knowing he had to face his fear that day or he may never have the nerve to do it again. And so he jumped, pulled the parachute which opened nicely this time, and floated to the ground. When he landed, however, the impact caused the stitches in his knees to rip out.

After the flying ordeal ended, he drove in his car to Toledo to visit his girlfriend, as planned, only to get there and hear her say she was having second thoughts about their relationship and wanted to breakup. What a day it had been!

What day in *your* life comes to your mind, you know, the kind of day you would like to forget? We all have them. Maybe for you it happened this week, the day when everything seemed to go wrong, when life just seemed out of control.

There’s a verse in Hebrews that encourages me greatly when I think about the challenges of life. It’s Hebrews 2:17-18, and it talks about Christ: “For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way [Isn’t that interesting? Christ *had to be made like* us in every way, that is, He really became a human being. And why? Here’s why...], in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God [He became a man so He could become a priest, one who represents us before God Almighty], and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people [He became not only the priest, but the sacrifice as well]. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”

It’s that last statement that amazes, yes, *encourages* me greatly. The Lord Jesus suffered what we suffer. Because He did He is now able to *help* us, to *identify with us* as we suffer. That’s good to know, especially when life gets tough for us. He knows. He understands. And He makes it clear that there’s a way to honor God no matter how difficult the circumstances are that enter our lives—not in our strength, for sure, but in *His strength*.

The fact is, though we may have “bad” days, we’ll never have a day like the day Jesus had in Mark 14. This day actually started at *night* and climaxed the following morning when Roman soldiers drove spikes through His hands and feet.

In today’s message we’re going to travel with Jesus to Gethsemane . That’s where we left off last time, with Jesus agonizing in the garden, crying out to His Father and asking Him to take away the cup of Calvary’s wrath, yet ultimately submitting to His Father, “Not my will, but Your will be done.”

It was a night to forget, humanly speaking that is. What depraved men did to Jesus starting in Gethsemane is inhumane and unthinkable. Why did it happen? Keep this in mind... *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

At the scene of Jesus’ arrest, life seemed out of control. The Lord experienced three disappointments as recorded in Mark 14:43-52. Here’s the first...

### I. Jesus was betrayed by a fake follower (43-46).

Verse 43—“Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared.” Judas had apparently slipped away during the last supper in the upper room. Judas had followed Jesus for three years. He enjoyed privileges unknown by the majority of folks. He broke bread with Jesus, enjoying His priceless company. He learned from the Master. He even received power from Jesus enabling him to do miracles in Jesus’ name.

Judas held a respected position as the treasurer of the disciples. No one suspected he would do what he had done, but he did. He joined hands with enemies of Jesus for the love of the shekel. Oh, he had followed Jesus alright, but he was a fake follower plain and simple.

Judas hurt Jesus in two ways that night...

**A. Judas hurt Jesus with destructive deeds (43-44).** Verse 43—“Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.”

Note the title Mark uses to identify Judas. *The betrayer*. That’s what Judas was, a turncoat, a traitor, a fraud, one who acted as if he was something he were not. According to the Scriptures Judas committed two wicked deeds.

1. *He led the mob to Jesus (43)*. The mob was made up of representatives from the chief priests, the scribes (teachers of the law), and the elders—the three sections of the Sanhedrin. These then were not Roman soldiers, but a special police force under the jurisdiction of the Jewish high court. Their weapons indicate they thought they would meet resistance. Luke’s account states specifically that Judas was at the head of the pack (Luke 22:47). He wasn’t merely following wicked men in this deadly deed. He was spearheading it. What’s more...

2. *He initiated the plot against Jesus (44)*. “Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: ‘The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.’” We’ll comment on the plot itself momentarily, but for now please note who instigated it. *The betrayer had arranged the signal*. Judas came up with the signal. In the darkness of the garden, the soldiers would need some silent indicator which shadowy figure to apprehend. Judas picked it. “I will kiss the Rabbi,” he told his accomplices. “That’s the man you want. Put him under guard and take him away.”

Then, after the destructive deeds...

**B. Judas hurt Jesus with deceptive words (45-46).** “Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, ‘Rabbi!’ and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him.” Listen carefully to Judas...

1. *He used a word to betray*. What word? *Rabbi!* He called Jesus what he always called him. He used a title of respect and honor. But the heart attitude didn’t match the word. There was no respect and honor for Jesus in Judas’ heart, only self-seeking greed. It was a case of right word, wrong heart.

That’s the predicament we enter the world with, too. Our hearts are self-focused and blind. Oh, we can say the right words about Jesus and we can fool the onlooking world, but unless the Spirit of God gives us genuine repentance and rebirth, we’ll remain in the condition of *right word, wrong heart*. And in time, the truth will come out, as it did for Judas. In the end here’s what Judas did to Jesus...

2. *He used a kiss to kill*. Judas approached the Lord and *kissed* Him.

William Barclay explains, “It was customary to greet a Rabbi with a kiss. It was a sign of respect and affection for a well-loved teacher. But there is a dreadful thing here. When Judas says, ‘Whom I shall kiss, that is he,’ he uses the word *philein* which is the ordinary word. But when it is said that he came forward and kissed Jesus the word is *kataphilein*. The *kata-* is intensive and *kataphilein* means to kiss as *a lover kisses his beloved*. The sign of the betrayal was not a mere formal kiss of respectful greeting. It was a lover’s kiss. That is the grimmest and most awful thing in all the gospel story.”<sup>[1]</sup>

There’s disappointment #1—Jesus was betrayed by a fake follower. Let that sink in, brothers and sisters. That’s what our Savior endured for us, *the pain of betrayal*.<sup>[2]</sup> Yet He did not respond in hatred. According to Matthew’s account, Jesus said this to Judas, “Friend, do what you came for (26:50).” To the end, Jesus loved Judas.

Perhaps you’ve experienced betrayal recently. Know this. *Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted*. Look to Him this morning. And respond like Him, by His grace and power, so all will see Him in you.

## II. Jesus was defended by a fighter (47-49).

Verse 47—“Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off

his ear.”

Mark doesn't tell us who the sword-swinging man was. John records that it was Peter (John 18:10). John also tells us the servant's name was Malchus.

You say, “Why wouldn't Mark tell his readers it was Peter?” It's possible the reason is because it wasn't safe to write it down. Peter was still living. To put Peter's name in print in connection with Jesus' arrest could have endangered Peter.

“Why then did John record his name?” you ask. Because John wrote nearly thirty years later and by this time Peter was already dead—he'd been crucified upside down.

What can we make of Peter's actions that night. For starters...

**A. Peter meant well (47).** It was his love for Jesus that drove him to action. It was the sight of seeing wicked men put their hands harshly on Jesus that caused Peter's emotions to kick in. *Somebody* has to do *something*! So he did the irrational, albeit devotional thing. He took on the whole mob single-handedly, swung at a neck, missed, and lopped off an ear.

It's a good thing he missed the mark. Luke the physician records that Jesus actually healed the servant by touching his ear (Luke 22:51). Wiersbe comments, “Had Jesus not healed Malchus, Peter would have been arrested as well; and there might have been four crosses on Calvary.”<sup>[3]</sup>

There's little question that Peter meant well. But good intentions aren't enough, not for us, nor for Peter. In the end, by his actions...

**B. Peter misrepresented Jesus (48-49).** “‘Am I leading a rebellion,’ said Jesus, ‘that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.’”

Notice what Jesus is saying. He accomplished two things with His words.

*1. Jesus clarified the truth about Himself.* Am I a rebellion leader? No! I have come to you as a Teacher, and I have taught you openly.

John's account tells us something the other three Gospel writers omit (see John 18). When the mob came to arrest Jesus, the Lord asked, “Whom do you seek (4)?” They answered, “Jesus the Nazarene (5).” At that point, this happened, according to John 18:6, “When Jesus said, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground.”

Such was Jesus' power that all He had to do was speak a word and people fell before Him.

“Why didn't He stop the cruel mob, then?” you ask. For this reason. He didn't come to save Himself. He came to save sinners. In fact, John records what Jesus told Peter at this point (John 18:11), “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”

That was the truth about Jesus. He didn't come to be a political revolutionary. He came to save people from their sins. And to do that, He came to die and then conquer the grave.

Matthew's Gospel gives a fuller account of Jesus' words (Matthew 26:52-54), “‘Put your sword back in its place,’ Jesus said to him, ‘for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?’”

Note those final words and ponder Jesus' second point of clarification.

*2. Jesus emphasized His commitment to fulfill Scripture.* “But the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Mark 14:49).”

This violent arrest of the Messiah had to happen, says Jesus. It was to fulfill Scripture. Which Scripture? He doesn't say. Perhaps He has in mind Isaiah 53:12, as Luke 22:37 records, "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." It's possible the Lord is thinking about Zechariah 13:7, a prophecy He mentioned earlier in verse 27, "... Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones."

Can you imagine the results if Peter had succeeded and actually killed Malchus? Jesus and His followers would have been branded as political revolutionaries, as murderers, and the cross would have overshadowed by controversy.

Kent Hughes tells the following story about two nineteenth century preachers, Newman Smith and Robert Hall. "A controversy arose between the two on some religious point, and Rev. Smith wrote a bitter pamphlet denouncing Hall and his doctrine. Having finished the pamphlet, Smith was having trouble coming up with what he thought was a proper title. So he sent the book to a good friend (everyone needs a friend like this!) for a suggestion. Some time earlier Rev. Smith had written a widely read and helpful pamphlet entitled, *Come to Jesus*. When his friend read the new pamphlet against Hall, he sent the pamphlet back with this suggestion, 'The title which I suggest for your pamphlet is this, *Go to Hell* by the author of *Come to Jesus*.'" [\[4\]](#)

It's so easy to chop off ears. That's the world's way, to fight fire with fire, to return evil for evil. But that's not Jesus' way. He commands us to do what He did, to turn the other cheek, to love our enemies, to overcome evil with good.

J. D. Jones observes, "Christ's Kingdom is not to be advanced by the sword. In the affairs of the Kingdom force is no remedy. It is a lesson the Church of Christ has been slow to learn. Again and again the Church has invoked the help of the secular arm. She has again and again used pressure and compulsion to advance her interests... Again and again the Church has used fire and prison and scaffold. Often, no doubt, it was done honestly and sincerely. But it was all very pitiful and tragic. It was a repudiation of Christ's own teaching. Religion is free, the response of the soul to God. A forced religion is a contradiction in terms." [\[5\]](#)

There are the first two disappointments our Savior experienced at His arrest. First Jesus was betrayed by a fake follower. Then He was defended (and misrepresented) by a fighter. Here's the third...

### III. Jesus was deserted by His friends (50-52).

Mark's account here is short and sweet, just like the rest of his Gospel story. He uses an economy of words to communicate volumes about Jesus. Three things happened at this point.

**A. Everyone ran in fear (50).** "Then everyone deserted him and fled." *Everyone* high-tailed it away from Jesus. Peter did. John did. Andrew did. Thomas did. They *all* ran for cover. They may have said, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you," and they *all* said it according to verse 31, but still they ran.

**B. A young man followed for awhile, then fled (51-52).** "A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind."

Who is this unnamed person? The Greek word for "young man" is *neaniskos* which denotes one in late adolescence, in his teens.

Many feel the young man was actually the writer of this Gospel record, John Mark himself. That would explain why Mark alone of the four Gospel writers includes this episode. Acts 12:12 indicates that the early church met in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. It's quite possible that Jesus and the Twelve actually ate the Last Supper in the upper room of that very home.

Perhaps Judas brought the soldiers first to the upper room, didn't find Jesus, and then headed for Gethsemane . If

that happened, and if Mark was in the house and was awakened by the mob, perhaps Mark grabbed his sheet<sup>[6]</sup> and ran from the house to warn Jesus and the others.

Barclay offers another conjecture of what may have happened: “It may be that Mark was actually present at the Last Supper. He was young, just a boy, and maybe no one really noticed him. But he was fascinated with Jesus and when the company went out into the dark, he slipped out after them when he ought to have been in bed, with only the linen sheet over his naked body. It may be that all the time Mark was there in the shadows listening and watching. That would explain where the Gethsemane narrative came from. If the disciples were all asleep how did anyone know about the struggle of soul that Jesus had there? It may be that the one witness was Mark as he stood silent in the shadows, watching with a boy’s reverence the greatest hero he had ever known.”<sup>[7]</sup>

So Jesus is now *alone*. The disciples fled immediately. John Mark followed for awhile until seized, and then he too ran for his life. The point of the story is this...

**C. Jesus headed to the cross alone.** It’s why He left heaven, came to earth as a man, lived in perfection for thirty-three years, and then allowed wicked men to arrest Him. He was going to the cross and nothing would stop Him. The cross wasn’t man’s idea, but God’s. It was God’s eternal plan that His Son would go to the cross, bear the sin and judgment of undeserving sinners, including even those who deserted Him. He had come “to give His life as a ransom payment for many (10:45).”

*Death and the curse were in that cup,*

*Oh Christ, ‘twas full for thee;*

*But Thou has drained the last dark dregs,*

*‘Tis empty now for me.*<sup>[8]</sup>

What can we learn from all this? Surely, we learn to appreciate the Savior more fully, to grasp in greater ways the suffering He experienced for us. But we also learn from our Lord how to live, especially when in our own lives life seems out of control.

#### Make It Personal: When life seems out of control...

What we’ve seen today beckons us to affirm three truths.

1. *God is in control.* No matter how chaotic things around us seem, the Sovereign Lord is superintending, directing, working, leading, protecting, and fulfilling His eternal plan. He is in control.

You say, “But His ways don’t make sense to me!” They may not, but that speaks to our perspective deficiency, not His apparent confusion. He knows what He is doing in your life and mine, just like He did in Gethsemane .

2. *God is giving us an opportunity to become more like His Son.* That’s His agenda for us, after all. Ephesians 1:4 —“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.” God wants us to be holy and blameless, like His Son. He works all things together for that good (as Rom. 8:28 declares), “to conform us to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29).”

No matter how difficult the situation, you can be sure of this. God is in control and is desirous to use that circumstance to help mold you so you resemble His Son more fully.

E.g.—

You say, “Okay, I know God is in control. After all, He is God! And I can see from His Word that He says He is using the events of my life (good and bad) to transform me into Christ’s likeness. I know that. But how should I respond? You’ve talked about what God is doing, and that’s encouraging. But what is it God wants *me* to do?” It’s this...

3. *God invites us to trust Him.* Friends may forsake us, and foes certainly will, but God never abandons His own. As Psalm 9:10 makes clear, “Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.”

Trust Him today, my friend. And be assured that the Savior unde

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] Barclay, pp. 345-6.

[2] See Psalm 55:12-14 “If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.”

[3] W. Wiersbe, p. 162.

[4] Kent Hughes, p. 176.

[5] J. D. Jones, p. 574.

[6] Typically men wore an undergarment called a *chiton*. This unidentified person is wearing only a *sindon*, an outer garment.

[7] Barclay, pp. 347-8.

[8] Quoted by Kent Hughes, p. 177.