| Mark 14:27-42 "With Jesus in Gethsemane" *** |
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Main Idea: As we travel with Jesus to Gethsemane, we see our Savior involved in four activities in Mark 14:27-42.

- I. Jesus made a prediction about Gethsemane (27-31).
  - A. He said His disciples would fall away (27).
  - B. He said He would rise from the dead (28).
  - C. He revealed the specifics of Peter's denial (29-31).
- II. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (32-36).
  - A. He invited witnesses to see Him (32-34).
  - B. He agonized with His Father (35-36).
    - 1. His prayer involved intimacy.
    - 2. His prayer involved an affirmation.
    - 3. His prayer involved honesty.
    - 4. His prayer involved submission.
    - 5. His prayer involved trust.
- III. Jesus served His disciples in Gethsemane (37-41).
  - A. He warned them (37-38).
    - 1. We need to watch and pray.
    - 2. If we live by our feelings, we're in trouble!
  - B. He warned them again and again (39-41).
    - 1. The disciples said they would die with Jesus.
    - 2. They couldn't even stay awake with Him.
- IV. Jesus faced His betrayer in Gethsemane (42).

Make It Personal: In light of Gethsemane, two questions are in order...

- 1. Am I sleeping?
- 2. Am I showing my appreciation for what Jesus endured for me?

## Gethsemane.

Just the word itself brings vivid images to many of our minds. Gethsemane is where the Lord Jesus Christ spent His final moments as a "free man" before wicked men arrested Him and ultimately crucified Him. Gethsemane is

where a mob of soldiers came following the betrayer to take Jesus by force under the cover of darkness. But something else happened in Gethsemane. There was anguish in that place beyond the perception of the naked eye and sorrow that human words cannot fully convey. A conversation took place there, a conversation between the Son of God and His Father in heaven.

Gethsemane is probably from the Hebrew word *gat s'mani*, meaning "press of oils." This garden was located on the lower slopes of the Mount of Olives. This garden was one of Jesus' favorite places. He often went there to be alone (Luke 22:39). He also frequently met there with His disciples (John 18:2).

This morning we're going to travel to join Jesus in Gethsemane by the help of Mark's Gospel account. As we journey there, we're going to see our Savior involved in four activities described in Mark 14:27-42.

Although I don't agree with all his theological conclusions, I do agree with William Barclay's observation when he writes, "This is a passage we almost fear to read, for it seems to intrude into the private agony of Jesus."

J. D. Jones shares, "There is NO paragraph in the whole of Scripture which I more shrink from handling than I do this. These brief verses take us into the Inner Sanctuary of our Lord's sorrow. Sometimes I feel that the best and only way of reading them is to read them in silence upon our knees."

It may be hard to go to Gethsemane but go there we must, for if we are to appreciate fully the wonder of our Savior's love, we must ponder what happened in Gethsemane. Notice the first activity Mark mentions...

# I. Jesus made a prediction about Gethsemane (27-31).

For the context notice verse 26, "When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives ." "They" is Jesus and eleven of His disciples (Judas has gone to set in motion his betrayal plot). The men are heading with their Master from the Upper Room in Jerusalem , where they just ate the Passover meal, to the Mount of Olives . Jesus probably delivered the predictions we're about to read as He was walking with the disciples from the Upper Room to the Mount of Olives, a walk that takes about twenty minutes.[2]

Jesus dropped a bombshell that shocked His men when He revealed His first prediction in verse 27...

**A.** He said His disciples would fall away (27). "You will all fall away,' Jesus told them, 'for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."

His words were blunt, straightforward, and heart-breaking. *You WILL*, He said. Not, *You MIGHT*, but *You WILL*. He told them they were going to do something, *all* of them.

You will all fall away. And then He quoted Zechariah 13:7 to support His prediction, for what they would do was predicted over five hundred years beforehand.

The verb "fall away" comes from the Greek *skandalidzo*, meaning "to put a snare in the way," hence "to cause to stumble." This verb is passive, so Jesus is talking about the effect the coming snare will have on His disciples. They will trip over a stumbling block, over a *scandal*, and *fall away*. What stumbling block? The cross.

That's the effect the cross has on people, on *us*. At first, it's a stumbling block. It doesn't make sense to the human mind. Indeed, it offends us.

To the disciples it would make no sense that Jesus would be arrested, abused, and killed. They knew He had the power to stop that inhumane treatment and establish His rule on earth. That's what they expected Him to do, what they wanted Him to do.

This is what tripped them up that night in the garden. The very shadow of the cross tripped them and caused them

to fall away.

Later, by God's grace, they not only accepted the necessity of the cross in God's plan, but they *embraced* it, knowing it was for them that Jesus died, for their pardon and deliverance from sin, indeed, for their salvation.

At that point Jesus made a second prediction...

**B.** He said He would rise from the dead (28). "But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Hear the certainty of His announcement. *After I have risen*. His resurrection, though yet future as He spoke these words, is as good as done. Jesus' death was imminent but it would not be His end. He would rise from the dead. In fact, He indicated He would meet them again, and where, in Galilee, their "old stomping grounds" up north where He'd first called them to follow Him and where they'd enjoyed such wonderful fellowship in previous days.

At that point Peter erupted. Verse 29—"Peter declared, 'Even if all fall away, I will not.'" In other words, "Lord, you know I respect you and your wisdom, but this time You're wrong. There's no way I'm going to turn away from You. The rest of these men might. But even if *all* of them do, I won't. You can count on me!"

Peter is the classic example of, "Speak first, think later, regret what you said." No one can fault his intent and even his devotion. The thought of his Master being forsaken stirred his soul. *I won't let that happen*, He insisted.

There's a touch of pride that surfaced. *Even if ALL fall away, I will not*. I'm different from the others, Jesus. Apparently, you don't know me. I'll be there for You. I won't let you down. I...I...I...

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Cor. 10:12)

Notice Jesus' response...

C. He revealed the specifics of Peter's denial (29-31). Verse 30—"I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'today —yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

Note the particulars Jesus gives. He explains the *nature* of Peter's falling away—"you will *disown* Me," a word meaning "claim no knowledge or relationship to." He mentions the *frequency* of Peter's falling away—"you will disown me *three times*." He identifies the *time* of Peter's denial—"today, yes tonight, before the rooster crows twice." That's a pretty specific prediction, isn't it?

By the way, Matthew's parallel account records Jesus as saying, "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times (26:34)." Matthew mentions only one rooster crow, while Mark indicates Jesus referred to *two* rooster crows. Critics cry, "See, a contradiction! The Bible is full of them!" Hold on. There's no contradiction here, as a little understanding of Jewish life in the first century makes clear.

In their harmony of the Gospel accounts, Thomas and Gundry comment, "The third of four 'watches' of the night (12:00 A.M. to 3:00 A.M.) was called 'cockcrowing'... The cock would crow early in this period and again toward the period's end. In Mark's account Jesus referred to the second crowing so as to be quite specific. Matthew records a reiteration of His prediction in more general terms, that is, he refers only to one crowing, the second, which was the more commonly known of the two. Before dawn the next morning, Peter was to deny the Lord three times." [3]

Did the specifics convince Peter? Not one iota...

Verse 31—"But Peter insisted emphatically, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.' And all the others said the same."

Peter says he is ready to die for Jesus. He meant it too, which explains within a short time he will take on a whole company of soldiers with a sword single-handedly!

And don't miss that final statement. The other ten disciples to a man said the same thing Peter said. No way,

At that point the conversation ended, apparently since Jesus and His men arrived at their destination, *Gethsemane*. Verse 32—"They went to a place called Gethsemane …" What happened there? Mark tells us…

#### II. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (32-36).

Some people are quite private, especially when it comes to suffering. They want to be alone. It's interesting to me that Jesus wanted His followers to know about the suffering He endured that night. How do I know? Because of what He did in verses 32-33, "They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took Peter, James and John along with him..."

Note that in His time of great agony...

**A.** He invited witnesses to see Him (32-34). Notice Jesus gentle forbearance here. Who did He select to witness the agony of Gethsemane? He took *Peter* along even though He had just predicted Peter would deny Him.

Some seem to have the notion, "Well, if Jesus was God, then the pain He experienced didn't hurt Him like it does us." That mistaken thinking misrepresents His humanity. In order to eliminate any doubt concerning the reality of His suffering, all we must do is consider carefully what happened in Gethsemane ...

Verse 33 concludes, "...And he began to be deeply distressed and troubled [KJV 'sore amazed' and 'very heavy']."

Wessel comments, "The two verbs translated 'deeply distressed and troubled' together 'describe an extremely acute emotion, a compound of bewilderment, fear, uncertainty and anxiety, nowhere else portrayed in such vivid terms as here [observation by Bratcher and Nida]. This deep agony Jesus shared with his disciples." [4]

Why would He share it? Some people retreat into privacy when they're hurting, but Jesus didn't. He intentionally brought along His disciples. Why? You say, "Because He needed their support." Granted, He *appreciated* their support, but I'm not sure their presence was primarily for His benefit. I would suggest they were invited for *their* benefit...and ours.

Remember the role of an apostle. Jesus chose twelve men and privileged them to experience all kinds of things, to witness His life close up for three years. Why? So that when He was gone they could be His *witnesses* (that was the standard for and purpose of an apostle according to Acts 1:21-22).

How would we know the depth of our Savior's suffering in Gethsemane had He experienced it alone? We would not know. But He wanted His people to know, as best their finite minds could comprehend, to know in some measure the infinite sorrow, pain, and aloneness He experienced in order to save His people from their sins. Yes, in His grace He invited Peter, James, and John to see His Gethsemane experience, so that having seen it they might share it. And, of course, that's where Mark got his information. He wrote this Gospel from insights gained from Peter.

So what did the witnesses observe that night in the garden? First of all, they heard Jesus say the following in verse 34—"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch."

The words "overwhelmed with sorrow" translate the Greek word *perilypos* which means "very sad," "profoundly sorrowful," "overwhelmingly sorrowful." The word is used of the rich ruler in Luke 18:23 who, when Jesus told him to give away his wealth and follow Him, "became *very sad*." Jesus' sorrow was so intense He felt as if He was going to die right there in the garden.

At that point, Jesus changed locations, according to verse 35. "Going a little further, He fell to the ground." Luke's account says He withdrew from them "about a stone's throw" (22:41).

Meditate on those words, "Going a little further." Jesus could take the disciples only so far, then He was alone. Ponder J. Vernon McGee's insight, "I must be very frank and say that we can only stand here on the fringe. There are mysteries in the garden that we cannot understand. I think it is audacious and actually borders on the blasphemous for people to sing, 'I'll go with Him through the garden,' I'm sorry, friend, if you don't mind, I'll beg off. I can't go with Him through the garden. You don't know how weak and stumbling and bumbling I really am. I can't go with Him through the garden, but I will stand at the edge and watch Him pray."[5]

Let's do that. Let's stand at the edge and watch Him pray. What do we see? There in solitude, with His chosen disciples observing from a distance, we see that Jesus...

**B.** He agonized with His Father (35-36). "Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba', Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Jesus wasn't whispering this prayer either. According to Hebrews 5:7, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."

How intense was His anguish? Luke tells us that Jesus' sweat became "like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground" (22:44).

What caused this extreme distress of soul? It wasn't the anticipation of the physical pain of crucifixion, although that would be excruciating. It wasn't even the realization that His chosen followers would all forsake Him, even though they would and that would grieve Him deeply. Those were temporary losses, as great as they were. Jesus had experienced life in a body for thirty-three years and friendship with these men for three years. The agony He dreads in Gethsemane is linked to something far deeper, an eternal loss facing Him. Indeed, He was about to experience the loss of something He had enjoyed, not merely for three or thirty-three years, nor even for thirty-three thousand years! There was something He had known and cherished for all eternity past, that is, perfect and intimate fellowship and oneness with His Father. That's what He was about to forfeit. He was about to experience for the first "time" ever the horror of being alienated and separated from His dear Father.

Hear His cry from the cross the next day. Mark 15:34—"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'—which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" That's what Jesus was facing in Gethsemane, hence the extreme dread.

But Jesus was willing to face even separation from His Father if that was His Father's will. And it was.

"Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer," as Isaiah explained in his prophecy in Isaiah 53:10. Simply stated, it was the Lord's will to turn His wrath against His own Son and thereby crush Him.

Peter referred to this divine purpose in his sermon in Acts 2:22-23—"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross."

You say, "Why?! Why would God crush His precious Son?" The answer is both simple and mind-boggling. He crushed His Son in the place of sinful human beings like you and me. He chose to judge His Son so that as a result He could pardon and rescue once-estranged sinners, and thereby reconcile them to Himself, adopting them into His family as His beloved children. It was God's will to judge His Son so that He might *not* judge you and me. In the words of Isaiah 53:11, "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities."

Now is it clearer why verse 35 says that Jesus "fell to the ground"? Feel the weight He is feeling, my friend, the weight of the sins of God-offending rebels, sins He Himself will soon bear, the weight of the impending torment He will experience in the place of those rebels, the weight of divine judgment as the just penalty for sin is administered

against Him in behalf of unworthy sinners. Feel the weight of Gethsemane, yes we must! Feel the weight. No wonder He fell.

Let's ponder carefully Jesus' prayer. It involved five things.

- 1. His prayer involved intimacy. "Abba, Father," He said. "Abba" is Aramaic for "my Father." It's not a formal title of respect, but the term a little child would use when jumping into his father's arms, "Daddy!"
- 2. His prayer involved an affirmation. "Everything is possible for You." You can do anything! You have all power and authority!
- 3. His prayer involved honesty. "Take this cup from Me." Jesus has been anticipating drinking this cup all His life (He referred to it back in Mark 10:38-39; He explained the significance of the cup at the Lord's Supper—see verse 24). In the Old Testament drinking the cup was a metaphor to depict experiencing judgment and punishment. In Gethsemane Jesus looks into the cup He is about to drink, the cup of the wrath of God, and He responds in the only logical way. "Take this cup from Me!"

There's such honesty in those words! He didn't want to drink that cup. He didn't want to experience the judgment of God for sin.

What made the cup so distressful to Jesus? Think of it this way...

If you get a little mud on a work shirt, you hardly notice. But a tiny spot on a white dress shirt draws major cause for alarm. Ponder this. As the perfect man, Jesus never experienced sin, not once, not one spot. Yet in a few hours while on the Tree of Judgment, He is going to bear the horrid sins of His people. He is about to wear the awful stain of sin.

- J. D. Jones explains, "His very purity made Him *exquisitely sensitive* to the pain and shame of sin... Take a simple illustration: the finer the ear, the greater the sensitivity to discord. A violin slightly out of tune inflicts no discomfort on a man with a dull and unmusical ear; it is sheer torment to a man whose ear is fine and sensitive. And it is with the soul as it is with the ear. The purer the soul the keener its sense of the awfulness of sin. It is not the sinner who feels the horror and shame of sin most keenly, but the saint...Now the Man Christ Jesus was an absolutely pure soul—a soul whose sensitiveness had never been dulled or blurred by sin. And so He felt sin, the shame of it, the awfulness of it, as no one else in the world ever did." [6]
- 4. His prayer involved submission. "Yet not what I will," He said. He laid aside His own personal interests. See His complete submission. It is not what I want that matters. Not my will.

That's where we struggle, isn't it? Our will becomes supreme. We know better, but we want what we want and we expect God to accommodate.

Have you felt that tension recently, the tension between your own personal desires and submitting to your Heavenly Father? "I don't want to be married to that person any more! It's too painful!" Marriage is painful at times. What keeps us going? The desire to please our Father and do His will.

"I don't know how much more I can take! My peers at school ridicule me all the time. I feel like running away and hoping I never see them again." But what keeps you from running? This will. The resolve to please your Heavenly Father, for indeed, He has placed those painful people in your life so that you might love them in His behalf.

5. His prayer involved trust. "Not what I will, but what You will."

Again, who would want to drink such a cup? Jesus certainly didn't. Why then did He? "Because He loved us," you say. Indeed He did love us, as unthinkable as it is. "Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us," as Ephesians 5:2 declares. But there's a greater reason He drank the cup, greater than His love for us. He drank the cup because *He loved His Father*.

Just minutes before this prayer Jesus prayed something else. It's not recorded in Mark's account, but it is in John's. John 17:24—"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."

Out of His great love for His Son, God the Father gave a love gift to His Beloved, a people that would exist for His praise and glory throughout eternity. The Father gave this gift to His Son before creation occurred (Eph. 1:4). It was also before creation that He gave His Son a work to accomplish. It was His will that His Son create the universe, particularly fashioning mankind in His image. Subsequently, following the rebellion and fall of His created image-bearers, it would be the Son's assignment to rescue from fallen humanity a people who would no longer go their own way, but by His grace live for the praise of their Maker as intended from the beginning.

That was the Father's will, to show His Son how much He loved Him by giving Him a people for His honor. And the Son reciprocated. He too showed the Father how much He loved Him. How? By willfully choosing to obey His Father, no matter what the personal cost.

"Not my will, but Yours be done."

Every day, brothers and sisters, indeed, countless times every day we are faced with the same choice Jesus faced in Gethsemane . And the right answer every time is this. *Not my will but Yours be done*.

It's worth noting, according to Luke's account, that at that point in Jesus' agony, an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened Jesus (Luke 22:43). Oh the love of the Father for His Son!

But that's not all. There's more in Gethsemane ...

## III. Jesus served His disciples in Gethsemane (37-41).

It's amazing to me that during Jesus' hour of greatest need we find Him doing what He always did...serving others. Let's notice how He served His followers that night.

**A.** He warned them (37-38). "Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Have you ever been caught sleeping when you should have been doing something else? It's probably past midnight, so it's not surprising that the men were extremely tired. Luke's account adds that they were "sleeping from sorrow" (22:45).

Jesus addressed Peter, probably because of his earlier insistence that *he* would never fail his Master, but the instructions certainly applied to all the disciples.

*Watch*, He said. And *pray*. As Wessel astutely observes, "The conquest of temptation can only come through these two actions." I see a couple of lessons here.

#### 1. We need to watch and pray.

The verb "keep watch" [Greek *gregoreo*] means "stay awake," "be alert," "be alive." "Keep your eyes open," is the sense. It's translated "Be on your guard" in Acts 20:31. Peter later used this word when he offered similar counsel to the readers of his first epistle in 1 Peter 5:8, "Be self-controlled and **alert** [KJV 'be vigilant']. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." In the noun form it even refers to resurrection, specifically to the resurrection of Jesus (Matt. 27:53).

Here's a definition: "to take heed lest through remission and indolence some destructive calamity suddenly

overtake one." [8] That's what we need to do, watch!

And *pray*. We don't have what it takes to stand on our own. We lack the resources. They are from *without*, not from *within*. Pray! Ask your Heavenly Father for what He alone can provide. Peter, you told me you wouldn't fall, but I'm telling you the only way you won't fall is if you *watch* and *pray*!

2. If we live by our feelings, we're in trouble! Here's why. "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." People who live by their feelings are unstable and undependable. They end up experiencing great frustration.

"But if I do something I don't feel like doing, I'm being hypocritical, aren't I?" No! Did Jesus feel like drinking the cup? Why did He drink it then? Because He submitted His feelings to His Father's will. He did what His Father commanded, no matter what.

Unfortunately, the disciples didn't apply Jesus' first warning, so...

**B.** He warned them again and again (39-41). Verse 39—"Once more he went away and prayed the same thing." Note that repetition in prayer isn't necessarily bad. It's *vain* repetition that God hates.

Verse 40—"When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him." They were embarrassed. Ever been there? Rest is a good gift from our gracious God. Rest isn't bad. It's just inappropriate at times, especially when danger lurks.

Verse 41—"Returning the third time, he said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

We've seen a sobering contrast this morning...

- 1. The disciples said they would die with Jesus. In fact, they insisted! However...
- 2. They couldn't even stay awake with Him.

At that point, Jesus said this in verse 42—"Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" With those words Jesus initiated the fourth activity...

## IV. Jesus faced His betrayer in Gethsemane (42).

Don't misread Jesus here. When He said, "Let's go!" it wasn't to run away from Judas, but to *face Him*. Jesus never ran from the will of God, only *to* it, and so must we.

These words must have encouraged Mark's readers immensely. Remember, Mark is writing this Gospel in the first century for people living in Rome . Many of them knew exactly what it was like to hear the rattling sound of soldiers' swords as they approached to arrest these "Christians" as enemies of the state. They felt the powerful urge to run away or to at least tone down their allegiance to Christ and thereby save their own hide. How could they stand in the face of heated oppression? This would certainly help. To know that what you are facing is familiar territory, familiar to your Precious Savior, gives great hope. It's a privilege to follow in the steps of the One who already paid the ultimate price for you!

# Make It Personal: In light of Gethsemane, two questions are in order...

1. Am I sleeping? I fear that some of us may be lulled to sleep. There's cause for alarm but we're not seeing it. Millions all around us are heading for Christless eternities. They're dying in their sins with a Savior. What are we

doing about it? Are we praying fervently? Are we seeking to reach them with the gospel? I fear that we may be distracted, preoccupied with peripherals, *sleeping*. Let's take heed to Jesus' exhortation. Watch and pray!

2. Am I showing my appreciation for what Jesus endured for me? How do I show Him? For starters, believe in Him. It was for you He died. Then meditate on what He did. Then share it with others. Let the world know. Take them to Gethsemane.

I suffered much for thee, more than the tongue can tell,

of bitterest agony to rescue thee from hell.

I've borne, I've borne it all for thee, what hast thou born for Me?[10]

- \*\*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] J. D. Jones, p. 558.
- [2] Observation by R. Alan Cole, p. 295.
- [3] Robert Thomas & Stanley Gundry, A Harmony of the Gospels, p. 220.
- [4] Wessel, p. 763.
- [5] J. Vernon McGee, p. 174.
- [6] J. D. Jones, pp. 561-2.
- [7] Wessel, p. 764.
- [8] Strong, J. (1996). The exhaustive concordance of the Bible...
- [9] See Kent Hughes, pp. 170-2, where he includes insight by J. Sidlow Baxter about the conflict between our *will* and our *feelings*.
- [10] Hymn by Frances Ridley Havergal, I Gave My Life for Thee