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Gethsemane (Part 1)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg explains the account of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane found in Mark chapter 14. Jesus was troubled and stressed by the severity of what he was about to face. He specifically asked his disciples to stay awake and pray to avoid temptation, showing that prayer is a powerful weapon against spiritual warfare. Ultimately, Jesus humbled himself and submitted to the Father's will, wanting the Father to be glorified through him.

Transcript

In Mark chapter 14, beginning with verse 32, if we cover all that we should cover today, we'll be looking at three different Gospels, just because the material that we have to cover is getting increasingly important. We've come to, of course, not only the Passion Week, which all the Gospels give a lot of attention to and disproportionate attention to, but we've come to the latter part of the Passion Week, the actual night of the arrest of Jesus. And as we come to these more and more important things, the Gospels more and more spend time giving detail, and you're going to find fewer of the Gospels leaving things out, so we're going to have to be looking from one Gospel to the next for the more details.

Actually, this portion, I must confess to you, I'm going to be a little sloppier than I sometimes would be about giving every detail from every Gospel, just because, well, partly because I don't have time to work it all out, and because, secondly, some of the details are not as important as others. And when we're covering a story like earlier in the life of Christ, where there's maybe two Gospels, maybe even three that cover it, but they're mostly the same with a few different details, I usually try to tell you what each Gospel says. Now, I'll do that with all the important points still, but it gets a place where all the Gospels are going to have something to say.

It could be very time-consuming interweaving them and so forth and making sure we don't leave out any of the details. I don't mean to say we're going to be sloppy about it, but we're just not going to be as tight as we can, partly because we also have to get done, and there's a lot of material there. So, we come to Mark chapter 14 and verse 32

through 42.

And due to my bumbling yesterday, I didn't cover this. I was supposed to. I didn't even know I was supposed to.

I knew we were supposed to cover John 17, but I didn't realize we were supposed to cover this part, too. So, this puts us a little behind, but it's no big deal. After this, we'll turn to John and then to Matthew, so we're going to be all over the place.

In John 17, which is what we last studied, Jesus had left the upper room. In fact, we've been in John for quite a few of the last few sessions because of the upper room discourse. And Jesus, having taken the Lord's Supper there with the disciples and giving them that final discourse, then they walked to Gethsemane.

And it is my impression, though of course this may not be exactly accurate, it's my impression that Jesus prayed the prayer of John 17, perhaps as they were walking along. Jesus may have prayed it after they got there or before they got there, but I don't know. Maybe I'm just making that up.

I've always had the impression that as they were on their way to Gethsemane, he prayed the prayer that we studied last time. And yet there's more praying of Jesus seen here. There's more praying of Jesus at the end of his life recorded than anywhere else in the Gospels.

And here are some very famous prayers that Jesus prayed. Beginning at verse 32, when they came to a place which is called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, sit here while I pray. And he took Peter, James, and John with him, and he began to be troubled and deeply distressed.

Then he said to them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch. He went a little farther and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

And he said, Abba Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.

Then he came and found them sleeping and said to Peter, Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready or willing, but the flesh is weak. Again, he went away and prayed, spoke the same words.

And when he returned, he found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy and they did not know what to answer him. Then he came a third time and said to them, are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough. The hour has come.

Behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise up, let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand.

Okay, each of the Gospels give a little bit different account of this, nothing in the sense of conflict, just different ways of telling the details. For instance, we know from comparing the Gospels that Jesus actually prayed this prayer, which is recorded in verse 36, three times. Each time leaving his disciples after waking them up, going off, praying this prayer, and coming back, finding them asleep again.

So three times he went to pray, three times he came back and found them asleep. And yet the Gospels record this all differently. As I recall, I think John's Gospel only mentions the prayer one time.

This Gospel only mentions it twice, really, because it says in verse 36, it tells us what he prayed. And then it says in verse 39, again he went away and prayed and spoke the same words, that's the second time. And when he returned, he found them asleep.

Then verse 41 doesn't tell him of him going away a third time, it talks about him coming back a third time, implying that he'd gone back and prayed a third time. So it reads different in different Gospels. Even the prayer itself is a little different in some Gospels.

In Matthew, or Luke, I forget which, I read them all recently, but in one of the Gospels it says, Jesus said, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. That's Matthew, I believe. And in Luke's version, I believe he says, if you are willing, may this cup pass from me.

Now, it's not quite like either in this one, because he affirms that it is possible, all things are possible. And he asks that the cup be taken from him, but he surrenders his will to that of his father and says, yet not my will, but thine, be done. Okay, now let's have a look at this passage, and we'll talk about the meaning of some of these things.

Now, they came to a place which was named Gethsemane. I think it's John's Gospel that tells us that he was accustomed to praying there. Which is no doubt why Judas was able to find him there.

It's not likely that he had pre-announced to Judas necessarily that he was going there. But it does tell us in the Scriptures that Jesus was wont, the King James says, or accustomed to going and praying in that particular place. So Judas would have no difficulty in knowing where he was likely to be.

He said to the disciples, sit here while I pray. Now, that's most of the disciples. There were eleven there, and he left eight of them somewhere.

It doesn't say quite where, maybe at the garden gate or something. But he took three of those eleven, Peter, James, and John, with him to a place in closer proximity where he himself was going to pray. He was at least within their earshot, I think we should

assume, and yet maybe out of earshot of the others.

Now, these three disciples have already been made to stand out in our awareness by other stories in the Gospels. It's the most prominent disciples of the twelve, clearly. We do remember, of course, Thomas because of his doubting, and a few other disciples come to mind.

Judas is scary, it's fairly memorable. But Peter, James, and John are definitely the big names. In fact, it was another James, when this James was killed, another James, the brother of Jesus, became prominent and kind of filled that role.

And so we find Paul talking about Peter and James, another James, and John, in Galatians he calls them the pillars, or those who seem to be the pillars of the church in Jerusalem. Well, these three certainly appear to be the pillars here too. When Jesus went in to raise the dead at Jairus' house, he left his disciples outside, and everyone else too, except for these three disciples and the two parents of the girl who was dead, and raised them.

So they got to witness that, which other disciples did not. Perhaps more significantly, they were the three, and the only three he took with him up on the Mount of Transfiguration. The other nine were left at the bottom to hassle with demon-possessed people that were brought their way, and the three privileged ones actually went to the top of the mountain, and saw Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus in glory.

And then we find again here that he takes them into the garden further, to be with him while he prays. By the way, there's one other case where the three plus Peter's brother Andrew are mentioned, especially in Mark 13, just as the introduction to the Olivet Discourse, when Jesus announced that the temple would be destroyed. Inside it says Peter and James and John and Andrew came to him privately and said, when shall these things be, and what is the sign that these things are about to come out.

So Andrew got in there once, but it was still mostly the same three guys. Now that doesn't mean he didn't give responsibility to others. As I recall, when he wanted to feed the multitudes, he first turned to Philip about it, and said, where shall we get bread? So all the disciples had some responsibility, no doubt, and Judas was a treasurer.

In many organizations that would make him a very important person, but he wasn't in the top three. So we are to assume that all the disciples had significance and had responsibility, but there were three that Jesus singled out for, I don't know, special treatment, although that's what it appears to be, but special occasions to be with him. They became the prominent ones in the early church, as I mentioned.

Peter and John, two of them, are seen as the ones who go together places in Acts chapters 3 and 4. They go to the temple at the time of prayer together, and they're in prison together, they're beaten together, they preach together, Peter and John. And then

James, John's brother, gets beheaded fairly early on, and then James, the brother of the Lord, is prominent, but he seems to be linked in Paul's mind, in Galatians, with Peter and John and that other James. So there always were some that were very prominent, even above the other apostles, and they were chosen by Jesus for that office, it would appear, before he left.

He not only chose the twelve to be basically the leadership of the entire church, but he chose from among the twelve a few. And it's possibly a choice like this that got James and John thinking the way they did, when they began to think, well, maybe we could have the right and the left hand seats in the kingdom. And they sent their mother to see if that was something that could possibly be arranged.

And perhaps this arose because of Jesus' special treatment of them. They began to interpret that in terms of prestige and privilege and power and authority and all those carnal things, which leaders sometimes get into. But Jesus didn't promise it to them, even though they were prominent, he didn't promise them the right hand and left hand seats.

In fact, the Bible tells us that when the other disciples learned that Peter and John had put this request to Jesus, the others were upset with them, were angry at them for doing this, which might suggest there was a bit of, you know, might have been some rivalry among the apostles. I mean, they were human. They weren't exactly real spiritual guys when Jesus called them and not real spiritual when he left them either.

You know, I mean, when the spirit came, that changed a great deal. But they weren't exactly fully sanctified. After all, it was the Passion Week, the very end of it, when he had to ask them what they were talking about on the road.

Oh, we were talking about who's the greatest, you know. It would seem possible by Jesus showing his favoritism to these three that that would arouse the natural carnal jealousies and so forth that we find often enough in human relationships. But that didn't prevent Jesus from doing it, because these men apparently had a special call, judging by their role in the book of Acts later on.

And so he brought them closer. Now, Jesus was, you know, he loved everybody. I mean, there wasn't anybody so lowly or poor that he wasn't concerned about them.

In fact, he certainly, if anything, if he showed favoritism to anyone, it would appear to have been the poor and the meek and the fallen and so forth, rather than the people of prestige in the society. But he was, I think, approachable by everyone. A Nicodemus could approach him.

A Simon, the Pharisee, could invite him over and he'd go. He tried to be available, but he also tried to get away from people a lot. No one can read the Gospels with their eyes

open without seeing this clearly.

Jesus frequently said, let's get out of here and get in the boat. We're getting out of here. Now, when he got to the other side of the lake and found the people who'd ran around the top of the lake and they were waiting for him, he had compassion on them and he stayed.

He didn't leave them and say, what? You again? But he stayed around and ministered to them. But sometimes he actually left the country to seek this seclusion with his disciples. So, you know, Jesus was approachable, but he also had friends that were closer than others to him.

He wasn't equally approachable by everyone. The multitudes certainly didn't get as much out of him as the disciples did. He spoke to the multitudes always with parables so they wouldn't understand.

And he just explained everything privately to his disciples. And among his disciples, he picked 12 to be apostles. Among the apostles, there were three that were given special privileges.

And even among them, there would appear to have possibly been one that was Jesus' favorite. At least he's so described in the Gospel of John as the disciple that Jesus loved. So although Jesus loves all men, certainly in his dealings or his choices of what he does with different people, he may appear to be showing favoritism.

But in fact, he knows what he's doing. He's preparing these guys for a life of leadership. And even more than the other 12, these three were going to be the point men of the church in the book of Acts later on.

So he took them with him to hear him pray and to pray with him. And as he took them in, it says he began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Now, why did he get so troubled? I know he was going to the cross.

I guess that would trouble anyone, but isn't that kind of wimpy? I mean, after all, there's an awful lot of pagan guys who've gone boldly and defiantly to their death without a whimper. And here Jesus weeps and he pours a sweat, as it were, drops of blood. He's deeply troubled and agitated.

Is that wimpy or what? No, it's not wimpy. If it was just a matter of dying, I'm sure Jesus would have been much less affected. As I mentioned, Christians, lesser Christians have died valiantly with joy in painful ways, even crucified.

Jesus was facing something that no one can fully understand because no one on this planet, no one short of going to hell will ever know exactly what it's like to be totally forsaken by God. Even the unbeliever today has never known the phenomenon of being

totally forsaken by God. Now, it's true Paul says before we were Christians, we were without God in this world.

That simply means we didn't know him. We were not without his mercy. We were not without his blessing.

Jesus said God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and causes the rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous. And it's obvious that there are common graces, common pleasures, common goodness that God bestows on all people, including his enemies. Life itself is a blessing from God.

Eyesight or the enjoyment of food or the absence of pain momentarily would be great pleasures that some people would love to have who don't have them. But they have other things too for which they can be thankful. The fact is, even non-Christians experience a great deal of mercy from God.

None has ever known total abandonment from God except Jesus. And he had a bit of a feel for what that was going to be like. After all, there was a cup that he was going to drink.

He hasn't mentioned it yet in the story, but we did read the story. He did pray that the cup could be taken from him. This cup is no doubt the cup of the wrath of God.

Many places in the Scripture, in the Old Testament and the New, there is reference to this cup of wrath, the cup of the sins of, generally in most contexts, it's the sins of some particular people, whether it's the Canaanites, the Amorites, where God told Abraham the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full, so it wasn't time to judge them yet. The cup of wrath wasn't full for them. Or whether it's the Jews themselves, when Jesus said, your fathers killed the prophets, and you're going to fill up the measure of your fathers.

Meaning they're going to kill him, and that'll fill the cup. It says in Revelation that those who worship the beast in his image will drink of the wine of the wrath of God that is poured unmixed into the cup of his wrath, or of his indignation. So the wrath of God is the cup, no doubt, that Jesus was facing.

But while the Canaanites, when they were exterminated by Joshua, were drinking their cup, which took 400 years for them to fill, from Abraham's time to then, or more. And while the Jews in 70 AD were drinking their cup, which Jesus said they were about to fill up, and that generation would do it and drink it. Jesus drank the cup of the sins of everybody of all time.

Not just the sins of one nation. I mean, if you want to look at what drinking the cup of God's wrath is for a single nation, I dread to take this example because I'm so frequently doing it, but 70 AD is the one we know the most about. We don't have as much detail about the conquest of Canaan as we do about 70 AD because of Josephus.

And it's like hell. I mean, it's as bad as you can imagine hell to be. And that's the cup that one nation had to drink for their sins.

And Jesus drank the cup not for a nation or two or three or ten, but all the sins of all humanity for all time. And it's got to be like hell. Only multiplied a million fold.

And Jesus was going to experience what no society has ever known. And that is the total absence of God. This is how I understand at least the theology of it because he did say on the cross, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? There was a hell to pay for our fallen humanity.

There is still. And hell is in fact the place of total separation from God, the total absence of all light and goodness and pleasure from God. That's why it's outer darkness.

That's why there's weeping and ashen teeth. That's why it's compared with the torment of flames and so forth. It's a horrendous, pleasureless, tormenting experience for people.

And some people said, well, Jesus, you know, he didn't suffer forever. People say he took our punishment. He went to hell for us or whatever.

He didn't suffer forever. He only suffered for three days that way. And where sinners suffer forever and ever.

Well, I'm not sure. But I'm not sure that the quantity of time spent is anything comparable to the quality of the torment. It's something that people, only people in hell know.

Total abandonment from God. It says in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, that they shall be punished from the presence of the Lord, eternally punished from the presence of the Lord. The people who are judged at Jesus' coming, they will be eternally punished from the presence of the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 1:9. That is what hell is. It's from the presence of the Lord. Jesus got a taste of that.

And I don't know if it makes a big difference whether it's three days or three zillion years. I think it's so intense that the time element is irrelevant. And that, I believe, is what Jesus was anticipating.

It says he began to be troubled and deeply distressed. He wasn't wimping out here about the pain of the cross. Although anyone would certainly be justified in not looking forward to that.

I'm sure I'd cry, you know, if I was facing a cross. Even if I didn't have to bear the sins of the world, if it was just my own sins. You know, I'm sure I'd weep and howl and be a real wimp.

But that's not what was happening here. Jesus had something much deeper that was going on. Then he said to them, the three, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.

Stay here and watch. Now, my soul is sorrowful even to death seems to mean that I'm so overwhelmed that I just don't even know that I can survive if this doesn't let up to a certain extent, if I'm not relieved in some measure. I mean, my soul is so great I could die.

Jacob spoke that way when he had lost Joseph and now Benjamin was being taken from him. He said, if I lose Benjamin too, you'll bring down my white hairs to the grave with sorrow. In other words, I'll die of sorrow.

I just won't be able to survive that. I'll lose all will to live. And it is certainly the case that you can feel so abandoned, so depressed that you wonder how even physically your body could survive it.

Usually we do. But I don't think Jesus was necessarily using hyperbole here. I think it's very possible that had he not prayed, had not an angel actually come and minister to him, as the scripture says, he might have even died just from the sorrow.

He might not have ever made it to the cross. So he said, stay here and watch. And watch doesn't mean watch me pray.

It means watch and pray. Watch doesn't mean look on, as it does in our modern English usually, but it means stay awake. Just like fast means to avoid food, watch means to avoid sleep.

It's the biblical corollary of watching and praying are frequently mentioned together. And fastings and watchings are mentioned together too. And fasting and prayer.

See, prayer is frequently accompanied by fasting and or watching. That is to say, it would appear, you know, there's not an awful lot in the Bible to go on to explain the rationale for this, but it would appear from certain statements of scripture, that a prayer time is intensified by missing meals for it or by missing a night's sleep or some hours of sleep for it. And, you know, I can't give you the rationale behind that.

I'm not sure why that would make a difference, but perhaps it is simply a way of demonstrating one's sincerity. It's sort of like saying, God, I won't let you go. I'm not even going to take a break to sleep or eat until you bless me.

You know, like Jacob Breslin was saying, I'm not going to release you from this time. I'm not going to interrupt my prayers for something as mundane as sleeping or eating. I'm going to press in.

I'm going to lay hold on God until he blesses, until the righteousness of Jerusalem goes forth as a lamp that burneth. And so Jesus told his disciples, really, stay awake. That's the only command he gave them initially.

Later he told them they should pray too. But he says, stay here and watch, which just means stay here and stay awake. He went a little farther and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.

Now, it's interesting, verses 35 and 36 both record the content of the prayer. The first part is sort of summarizing what he prayed. The second part is an actual quote.

In verse 35 it says he prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. That's not an exact quote. It's a summary of what his prayers contained.

In one of the Gospels, at least, I believe it's in Luke, it could be Matthew, it actually records him saying, Lord, Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Mark summarizes that he prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. But then he says, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.

Take this cup away from me. So it seems to have gotten more intense. The first part of his prayer was, if possible, could you maybe let this cup pass from me? Is there any way? And then finally he gets a little more assertive.

All things are possible for you. Take this cup from me. But he wasn't bossy about it.

I may have emphasized a little more than he did just now, but he was getting emphatic. But he was also saying, not my will but yours. Which is an interesting thing.

When he said, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Well, wasn't it possible to? What was the cup but the cup of suffering? Wasn't it possible that God could have taken that from him? Of course it was possible. In Matthew, when Peter sought to prevent Jesus from drinking the cup, Jesus said, Peter, if I wanted to, I could call twelve legions of angels and take care of this real quick.

I don't have to drink this cup. But he said in John's version, the cup that the Father has given me, should I not drink it? The point is, if it's possible for me to avoid this and still do the thing I should, if it's possible for me to neglect no duty, if it's possible for me to remain in your will and avoid this, then please, let's do that. Let's find some other way to get the job done if there's any other possibility.

He's not saying, God, I don't know if it's possible for you to get me out of this situation. That's not the question. God could get him out of anything, as Jesus himself affirmed the

same night.

But the question is, is it possible within the will of God? Not everything is possible with God. That says in Jeremiah that nothing is too difficult for him. But that's not the same thing as saying that nothing is impossible.

Now, there are scriptures that do use the word impossible in that way. With God, nothing should be called impossible. But that's a hyperbole.

There are some things that are called impossible. In Titus 1, 2, it says, God who cannot lie. That's something he can't do.

That's impossible for him to lie. It goes right against his character. He can't be anything other than what he is.

Paul told Timothy that God cannot deny himself. James said that God cannot be tempted with evil. There are just certain things that would just go right against God's own grain.

He can't be other than what he is. And that's why, of course, people say, well, can God do everything? And you say yes. And they say, can he make a rock he can't move? You got yourself in a pickle by giving the wrong answer the first time.

Because he can't make a rock that he can't move because it would defy his very omnipotence. He can't do that, which violates his own nature. There are things he cannot do.

And some of them are, he can't do certain things without violating his own will and his own purposes. Could he deliver Jesus from the soldiers? Piece of cake. When Jesus said, I am, they all fell over backwards.

You know what? He could have done more than that. He could have burned them alive with his voice. He's going to do that to the man of sin when he comes back.

He's going to destroy him with the brightness of his appearance. Jesus could have done far worse things to him than that. There was no danger that God couldn't get Jesus out of.

The question is, could God with consistency to his purpose and will, could he let Jesus out of it? The answer seems to be no. And that being so, that tells us something very important. Namely, that God himself could think of no other possible way for people to be saved, but for Jesus to go to the cross.

And if that is true, then it must be the supreme insult to God when people say, well, I can be saved without Jesus. You know, all religion is about the same. If you're just sincere, all mountaintops lead to the same, you know, place and so forth.

I mean, all roads lead to the same mountaintop. When people talk like, well, Jesus is kind of, you know, dispensable. It's kind of nice what he did.

He died for sinners. But after all, there's some nice teachings in Buddhism too, and in Zoroastrianism and Confucianism. Who's to say they're wrong? And who's to say those people are all wrong? Well, it suggests that Jesus is dispensable.

That it's possible for people to be saved without Jesus dying, and without the merits of his death and resurrection being applied to our own case and our own soul. It is suggesting that God paid a price in giving his son, which was not really that necessary. He could have done something cheaper.

That God's just a really poor economist. That he paid the ultimate cost, the precious blood of his son, and yet there was some other way he could have worked it out a little easier, but just didn't think of it. Now, that's what Jesus is saying.

If it's possible to work this out some other way, if it's possible to get your will done and have this cut past me, then let it be so. But on the other hand, if it's not, then whatever your will is, I certainly want it. Now, Jesus, when he said, not my will but yours be done, makes it very clear that Jesus didn't always have exactly the same wishes his father did.

He always obeyed his father's wishes. But he was a man of like passions like we are, although that term is actually used in Elijah in the Bible, but he was all that. He had desires.

He was tempted in all points like we are, yet he didn't sin. Those desires that were temptations must have been contrary to the will of God. Jesus actually had desires arise within him, as you do, that are not according to the will of God.

But like him, you can say, well, not my will but yours be done. Not everything that Jesus wished was actually the will of God, but everything he did was. And that's the difference.

If you wish, if you're attracted to, if you long for, if you desire something that's not good, that's temptation. If you choose something that's not good, that's sin. And Jesus desired, really, we could say the wrong thing here.

He really desired to get out of it. He desired something that wasn't really his father's will. If he had abandoned the project against his father's will, it would have been sin, and he desired to do that, but he didn't choose to do that.

Desire and choice are two different things. Choice is where it becomes a moral decision. And so he said, not my will but yours, but what you will.

And then he came and found the disciples sleeping and said to Peter, Simon, are you sleeping? Didn't I tell you to stay awake? Couldn't you watch for one hour? Now, I don't

know whether that means Jesus had actually been praying for one hour, and Peter hadn't been able to stay awake that long. I don't know whether that's how long Peter would have had to stay awake, for Jesus to find him awake at this point, because Jesus had been praying that for a period of time, or whether it means Jesus prayed a much shorter time than that, and an hour is one of the smallest increments of measurements that the Bible usually refers to when it's not being literal. An hour is coming when the dead will rise and so forth.

But I have a feeling Jesus prayed considerably longer than the text requires to read. You can read his prayer in verses 35 and 36 in a few moments, in a few seconds actually, but it's likely that there was more of a wrestling, there was more of an agonizing, more of a groaning, more of a pleading. Then, I mean, it's probably summarized for us here.

After all, how do you think we got the record of what Jesus prayed? How do you think anyone knew what Jesus prayed, if not someone was awake to hear it? The other nine disciples were further away. I'm sure they didn't hear it. Peter, James, and John were the ones with an earshot, but they slept, but apparently not immediately.

After all, if someone says, stay awake, you don't fall asleep the minute they turn their back. But it may be that they heard Jesus pray these words before they fell asleep, and so they were able to record these words. They don't know what happened or how long he prayed after that because they were asleep.

But the record certainly depends on their eyewitness and their recollections of this. So they must have stayed awake long enough to hear him pray these three times. Initially, just these few things, but his prayer probably was more protracted and may have required them to stay awake as much as an hour, which they did find impossible to do given their tiredness.

It says, Jesus himself said that in verse 38, Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, or willing, but the flesh is weak. This is the wonderful thing about Jesus' approach to religion and to life.

Man looks on the outward appearance and God looks on the heart. The disciples actually disobeyed him. He specifically told them to stay awake.

They didn't. They disobeyed him. To disobey your Lord is a sin.

Jesus didn't whitewash it. Jesus didn't say, It's okay to sin. But he saw the heart and he said, I know your spirit is willing.

I also know your flesh is weak. It's nice. In fact, Psalm 103 says, God remembereth that we are dust.

And he's aware. Of course, Jesus was more aware than even the Father in Old Testament

times must have been because Jesus was too dust. He was dust at that time and human flesh.

And he must have been more compassionate to those who were beset with infirmities according to Hebrews because of his being human. So he knew what flesh was like. He had fallen asleep a few times himself at inopportune times when Bo was sinking and stuff like that.

So he knew what it was like to be over home asleep. But he also knew what it was like to wish he had a few friends praying with him and staying awake and having some companionship in his grief. And he knew that his friends were not being rebellious.

He knew that they didn't choose to violate his wishes. I mean, we know that too because he said so. He said the spirit is willing, which proves that he knew their hearts, that they were indeed desiring to do what he said.

But the flesh was weak. And while I would never find any occasion to excuse sin in the sense of saying, It's okay. It's okay to sin.

It's not. Yet there are times when people sin and we, you know, in getting to know them or from what we know of them, we have to assume, well, their spirit didn't want, they didn't really want to sin. I'm sure that's not their life choice to be a sinner.

They want to be holy. It's uncharacteristic of them to sin like this. And we, you know, I think like Jesus, you know, sometimes give people the benefit of the doubt.

Now, in Jesus' case, there was no doubt to give the benefit of. He knew what was in their hearts. We don't know what's in people's hearts, but it's not a bad idea to give people the benefit of the doubt.

After all, the Bible says, Love believes all things. And so if we love people, we're going to, no doubt, read their actions and put upon their actions the best possible construction. That's really what love does.

So Jesus certainly did that. He was disappointed, no doubt, that they didn't do what he said, but he realized they were tired and he realized that they weren't perfect and he knew their hearts were no doubt willing to do the right thing. But he did wake them up and he told them to watch and pray.

In verse 38, Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. Watch, stay awake and pray so that you don't enter into temptation. Temptation is something that we face all the time, whether we pray or not, really.

I mean, even prayerful people like Jesus face temptation. However, we often don't win against temptation. And I can remember times in my life where I was perplexed that I

succumbed to a particular temptation over and over again when I would repent in every case, but I'd find myself doing it again.

I couldn't understand why that was and I realized that I hadn't really specifically prayed about that thing. Not recently, I'd prayed about it before, but it was one of those things I'd kind of slept off. And Jesus indicates that prayer is the way you buttress yourself spiritually against temptation.

Pray, even lose sleep if necessary to pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. Now, enter into temptation doesn't mean that you just simply experience temptation. Enter into the action that you're tempted to enter into.

Namely, what were they going to be tempted to do that night? Well, to flee. They were going to leave him. They were going to abandon him.

Now, Peter had been protesting earlier that evening that everyone else might flee, but not him. But he ran away with the rest of them. He did turn around and follow Jesus at a distance, as it turned out, but he too fled.

They would be tempted to forsake him, and that would be a wrong thing for them to do. And they were not going to be able to resist that temptation unless they stayed awake and prayed. They didn't stay awake and prayed, and they didn't resist the temptation.

They fled. Jesus, when he taught us to pray, among the few things that he included in his model of prayer, he said, pray this and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. So, prayer is a means of overcoming the evil one.

It certainly is a major part of spiritual warfare. In Ephesians 6, where Paul is talking about the armor of God, he talks about five pieces of armor, and then he talks about two weapons. One is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And the next one is Ephesians 6.18, he said, praying with all prayer and supplication for all saints, and watching their run through, the King James says. It means losing sleep for it, for prayer. And for me, he said, pray for him too.

So, praying and the word of God are the two principal weapons in that arsenal that Paul talks about. And Jesus certainly used prayer not only to protect himself, but his disciples. Remember when Jesus said to Peter, Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to sift you guys so that he could have you, but I have prayed for you.

So, Jesus, when he knew that the devil was after Peter, he prayed for him. And that was, of course, the best thing he could do for Peter. Although Peter did fall by Peter's own dumb choices, of course, probably no worse than some of ours, but still dumb.

Yet, he didn't fall forever. He repented, and that was no doubt because Jesus prayed for

him because Peter didn't pray enough. He fell asleep too often and did fall into temptation.

Verse 39, again, he went away and prayed and spoke the same words. At least they remembered the same part of the prayer. And when he returned, he found him asleep again for their eyes were heavy and they did not know what to answer him.

So, he didn't just find him asleep, he woke them up. It's clear by the fact that they didn't know how to answer him. How could they say it? Oops, I fell asleep again.

Sorry. He apparently confronted them again, though it doesn't say so in so many words. It's implied when it says they didn't know how to answer him.

Then, he went away and prayed again, though it doesn't say so, but he did. And in verse 41, then he came the third time and said to them, Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough. The hour has come.

Behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise and let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand.

Let's turn now to John chapter 18. This chapter is possibly the most detailed, in some respects, the most detailed description of Jesus being betrayed by Judas and being arrested in the garden. And also the first part of his trials.

You know, he stood trial six times in less than 12 hours. He stood trial before Annas, then he stood trial before Caiaphas the same night, then the next morning at dawn he stood trial before the Sanhedrin again, and then he was taken to Pilate, stood trial there, then he was taken to Herod, and then he was taken to Pilate again. Three times he stood before Jewish courts, Annas once and Sanhedrin twice, and then three times before Roman courts, Pilate, Herod, and Pilate again.

So that's a pretty busy court calendar, you know, for one acute person to have to fulfill in so short a time. But we have the appearance before Annas is recorded only in John. So let's return there because that's the first place he was taken.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples over the brook Kidron where there was a garden which he and his disciples entered. We already read of that. This is his approach to the Garden of Gethsemane.

And Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that would come upon him, went forward and said to them, Whom are you seeking? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus said to them, I am he. The he is in italics, which means that in the Greek it's just I am, ego eimi. And Judas, who betrayed him, also stood with them.

Then when he said to them, I am he, or ego eimi, they drew back and fell to the ground. Then he asked them again, Whom are you seeking? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. And Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he.

Therefore, if you seek me, let these go their way, so that the saying might be fulfilled which he spoke, Of those whom you gave me, I have lost none. Now, when he was approached, he knew what was going to happen. And Jesus was not the one caught by surprise.

It's quite obvious that the ones who came to arrest him were caught by surprise by some of the things that transpired. Jesus was the one in control. When I read these stories of the trials of Jesus, I think of it not so much as Jesus standing trial before Pilate, but Pilate standing trial before Jesus.

I mean, Pilate is on the hot seat. So are the Sanhedrin. I mean, they are condemned in court.

Their own court. By the judge of all who is their prisoner. But here in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is clearly the one in command.

He makes it clear. Why do they fall over backward? Well, I don't know. Maybe just so from the word go, everyone would know who really was in charge.

You know, I mean, it didn't look like Jesus was in charge. He was standing there unarmed. A couple of his disciples had swords, but he was unarmed and even his band was largely unarmed.

And here's a detachment of soldiers and officers coming and they're coming to arrest him. Certainly would look like a situation where he would be at a disadvantage. And he did intend to go without a struggle.

And it's very possible that this act of knocking them over backward, as I interpret to be what happened with his word, was simply his way of saying, now let's get the ground rules straight here before anything goes on. You know, I'm the one in charge. I'll go with you.

But he said elsewhere, no one can take my life from me. He said in John chapter 10, I have the power to lay it down. I have the power to take it up again.

It's my business. I can do it. No one else can take it from me.

And he was just kind of demonstrating that because to all natural appearances, he was definitely in a pickle. He was overpowered. So he decided to just let a little bit of his own

power be unleashed to show that he had no troubles whatsoever if he wished to escape from that situation.

But he first comes and asks them a question, whom are you seeking? And it's the same thing he asked again. Even though they answered him the first time. Now, there was a reason for him asking this question, in my opinion.

He said, whom are you seeking? They said, Jesus of Nazareth. He said, I am. And they fell over backward.

Now, some people felt like he uttered the unpronounceable name of God, you know, the tetragrammaton from the Hebrew, from which the name Jehovah, Yahweh is derived, the I am word. And that that knocked him over backward and that for anyone to pronounce that word would just be so powerful that it would knock anyone over. But I don't see how that could be the case because he said the same word a moment later when he asked them again, whom are you seeking? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

He said, I told you, I am he. Same word, egoimi, in both places. So they didn't fall over that time.

It's clear that Jesus was making the decision when and how and, you know, whatever would happen to these people in response to his words. I don't think he said magic words. I don't think his words were somehow mystically charged like an atom bomb that blew all opposition away just by speaking it.

I think it was just his, it was just the spiritual force there. Now, I personally don't think it was, I mean, necessarily Jesus who chose to knock these people over. I mean, his father was certainly with him, always, until he died on the cross.

And his father may have been vindicating him at this point. It may have been the father's will more than Jesus to show who was really in charge here. Jesus was humbled.

He humbled himself even to the death of the cross. He wasn't there to personally put on a great display of his own glory. But his father had said, I have glorified my name and I will glorify it again.

And Jesus had prayed, Father, glorify me with the glory that I had before with you. And the father was there to vindicate Jesus as his son. And, you know, actually, some people, it's been involved in debate on the just war question.

People who, Christians who are in favor of war often say, well, Jesus, he was forced. Look at that. He knocked over these people in the garden.

Well, that's not at all clear whether it was Jesus who did that or an angel that did that or what. Jesus didn't ask for it to be done. It's not like Paul who said to Elements, you know,

you're going to be blind for a while and it happened.

He didn't pronounce it on them. It just happened. Either Jesus did that himself or obviously some of the spiritual powers, either an angel or the father, knocked those guys over just so that they would know that they were not really, as it appeared to be, the ones in charge.

And so they got up again, apparently brushed themselves off, and he again initiated. He said, who are you seeking? And he wasn't running. That probably surprised him.

And he wasn't just, you know, trembling. He was initiating conversation. Well, who are you after? Now, they'd already said they were after him.

Why did he ask it again? Well, he wanted them to commit themselves strongly to who they had come to arrest so that he might point out to them whom they had not come to arrest. We're seeking Jesus of Nazareth. We told you that.

Okay, well, I told you I'm he. And since it's I'm the one you obviously want, these ones are obviously the ones you don't want because they're not Jesus of Nazareth, so they can go. Let them go.

And it says here in John that he did this so that he could fulfill his own words which were recorded in his prayer in the previous chapter, that he had not lost one. Exactly how it fulfilled those words, I'm not sure, because we usually think of him not losing one by not losing them through defection, except for Judas. However, they all end up defecting anyway, I mean, temporarily.

It sounds as if it means he didn't lose any of them through them being arrested and killed with him. That is, he still had the full complement, the full number of disciples when he was done and when he finished. But not simply because they didn't defect and backslide, but because they didn't die, which they no doubt would have if Jesus had not intervened for them and drawn the fire of the opposition to himself and said, listen, apparently I'm the one you want.

And it's quite obvious then that these are not the ones you want, so let them go. Now, actually, Mark's gospel gives us the indication that the soldiers, even though Jesus said, let these others go, the soldiers still made at least a grab for one of them and the others ran away. There's a real strange little passage in Mark's gospel about this.