

The Garden

Mark 14:26-52

Have you ever uttered the words, **“I will never...”** only to later to break your promise? I have.

I have said the following:

- **“I will never use email!”** (I thought it was the dumbest thing ever, as they taught us about it in computer class while in college). **Now answering email is a part-time job!!!**
- **“I will never have an inside dog!”** Then we had one that slept in between us for 11 years (and a new puppy that wakes us up in the middle of the night with various issues)!
- **“I will never drive a mini-van!”** We drove one for about seven years.

The disciples confidently assert, **“I will never fall away”** (from Jesus). But in the same chapter, we see them breaking their promise. There’s much to learn here.

The Garden

We have spent some 25 weeks in the gospel of Mark, and we’ve made it to one of the most moving passages, one of the most inspiring places in the gospel: the Garden of Gethsemane.

We are on **holy ground** today, my friends.

Jesus **often went to the Garden of Gethsemane** with his disciples (John 18:2).

It means **“olive press.”** It’s still filled with olive trees that date back close to the time of Jesus.

- Here we find Jesus, **pressed.**
- If you are pressed, you will find **fresh strength** here.
- The Savior is pressed into **prayer.**
- He’s pressured because of what’s about to happen: the **cross.**

The agony of Gethsemane is a prelude to the agony at Golgotha.

Spurgeon said that this journey to the cross “is worthy of an angel’s tongue. It needs Christ himself completely to expound it. May God, by his own Spirit, explain it to your heart.” (ht: CJ)

- You don’t have an angel; you have me! I’m woefully inadequate to expound such things.

I have reflected on this quote from Luther as we have been making our way to the cross.

Luther once said: “I feel as if Jesus Christ died only yesterday.”

May the Spirit do that today. May He help us draw near to the Savior.

The general theme of chapter 14 is the abandonment of Jesus.

Following the Lord’s Supper a rapid and total defection follows, leaving Jesus alone and abandoned. Let’s do two things today, (I.) Understand His Suffering, (II.) Apply His Suffering.

I. Understanding His Suffering

#1: Abandonment Predicted (14:27-31)

He predicts that his friends will leave him.

V. 27 – “You will fall away.” They will stumble.

- The word for “fall away” (*skandalizein*) means “to cause to stumble” or “to fall.”
- It’s more like a lapse rather than an egregious rebellion.”
- He quotes a prophecy to fortify the argument: **Zech 13:7**, “[I will] (the Father) strike the Shepherd and the sheep will scatter.”
 - We see the sovereign hand of God here.
 - “The first person singular, “ ‘I will strike,’ ” means that God

will strike Jesus as the shepherd—or allow him to be struck—in fulfillment of his will.”

- **And they do.**

V. 28 – Amazing Promise. “After I am raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

- “I’m not staying dead.”
- “I’m leading the way to the cross and also to resurrection.”
- “And I’m coming to get you.”
- “Despite your failure and falling away, I’m committed to you.”

V. 29 – Peter’s Promise: “Even though they all fall away, I will not.”

- Jesus’ suffering is not the only thing on display.
- Peter’s arrogance is also on full display!!!
- Even though *Jesus says* “you will all fall away”!
- Even though *He quotes Scripture saying* they will all fall away!
- **Peter disagrees with Jesus!**
- Peter is not impressed, with the promise, the prophecy, or the one giving it.
- He argues with Jesus.
- He doesn’t argue that some will fall away, he says that there’s one exception: **“You’re looking at him.”**

v. 30 – Jesus rebukes Peter once again.

- He says you’ll deny me three times tonight.

v. 31 - Peter’s protest. **“emphatically.”**

- And “they **all** said the same.
- However, we will read of Peter crumbling before a little girl, as he denies Jesus.
- Today there’s a church at the possible site of Caiaphas’ courtyard, where Peter denied Jesus three times. The church is called **Church of St. Peter**. There’s a sign leading you there that simply has the picture of a Rooster with an arrow pointing in the direction of the

courtyard. There's also a golden rooster atop a black cross on the roof of the building.

As we will see, they do flee.

Later, Jesus even feels forsaken by **the Father** (15:33-34).

- Jesus quotes Psalm 22 here. In some mysterious way, the *Father looked away*.

Application: Warning and Hope

Warning: Why do they fall?

- I think Peter genuinely loved Christ. He genuinely believed he wouldn't fall away.
- The problem? **Pride. Self-Reliance.**
 - They all fail to acknowledge their frailty.
 - They don't understand their neediness.
 - They don't know themselves.
 - They don't know their enemies.
 - They are too sure of themselves
- Luke adds these chilling words: "Satan demanded to sift you as wheat"
- We have an enemy.
- Our flesh is weak.
- Beware of the danger of self-reliance.

Prov 16: 18: Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov 28:26: The one who trusts in himself is a fool...

- **Unless we watch and pray – unless we look to God in desperate prayer, we will go the same way.**
- **Later, Peter would write:**

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary

the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.
'Resist him, firm in your faith.

That's the spirit in which we must walk.

**Not a spirit of cocky self-reliance, but in humble Spirit-dependence.
That's not the spirit of the age. It's more like the song, "We are the
champions..."**

The spirit of the age is like Peter, to have a big mouth and fat head.

Hear the words of McCheyne, the young pastor:

- **"The seeds of every sin known to man resides in my own heart."**

He says there's no sin that I may not commit.

"Take heed lest you fall!" (1 Cor 10:12)

Hope: Good News for the Fallen

- **By God's grace, that's not all Peter's remembered for. The Lord Jesus restored Peter and if you've read any of the Bible, you know what a hero of the faith he is.**
- **His testimony should encourage you.**
- **Three strikes and your out in baseball, but not for Peter!**
- **Failure is not final in the Christian faith.**
- **You are never beyond the reach of God's restoring grace so long as there's opp to repent.**
- **"There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus, no not one."**
- **"He loved them to the very end" (John 13)**

**Mark wants us to know: The Savior went to the cross utterly alone!
He poured into the disciples for three years, and then went it is time to die, they're gone.**

Gethsemane would involve *abandonment*.... And more...

#2: Agony and Abandonment (14:32-42)

32-34 – No one would ever **pray in such agony.**

- **Luke says he sweats **drops of blood** (Lk 22:44)**

James Edwards: “Nothing in all the Bible compares to Jesus’ agony and anguish in Gethsemane—neither the laments of the Psalms, nor the broken heart of Abraham as he prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:5), nor David’s grief at the death of his son Absalom” (2 Sam 18:33).

This is not the picture of paintings you may see of Jesus – where He’s got a perm, little glow, pious posture, etc.

- These verses sound like a lot of **Psalms of laments.**
- There’s a reason we have these Psalms.
- There’s a reason we have a book called **Lamentations.**
- Our prayer life should include great laments.

V. 33– Mark says he was “greatly distressed” and “troubled.”

- The term “**distress**” can be translated, “**alarmed**” or “**astonished.**”

34 – “Very sorrowful, even to death” has echoes of **Psalm 42:6, 11; 43:5**

Nothing did this to him before.

There is nothing like this in ancient literature.

That’s why it has the ring of truth to a skeptic. “How do you know the stories aren’t made up?” they ask. Several reasons. But for one, you would have nothing to gain by writing this! Greeks and Roman rulers died cool and dispassionately. Socrates, drinks hemlock and cracks jokes; Jews died passionate and fearless. People die Jihad happily.

Jesus is doing something totally different. If you want to start a religion, and make up a story, you wouldn’t write this – unless it happened. The hero saying, “I don’t want to do this mission.”
But this was no ordinary man; this was no ordinary death.

Prior to this time, there is no distress or deep trouble.

Why now? Why the agony? Why the distress? Why the blood-sweat?

Why can't he stand up?

So far in our study we've seen how the **Savior triumphing over everything!**

- **But the garden is different.**

*Was he **surprised** that the cross was coming? **No!***

- He has been telling them that the “**hour**” is coming.
- **He has made three predictions.**
- **He has been leading the way to the cross.**

In the upper room, *they sing!*

But in the garden is different.... He is sorrowful until death!

Why?

In the garden, Jesus began to experience the agonizing reality of what it means to be the **sin-bearer**.

Luther said, “No one feared death like this man” Why?

He was enduring something greater than physical torture...

- Physical suffering was the least of his suffering.
- In the Garden, he had a *foretaste* of what is death involved.

V. 35 – It was so agonizing that he began to pray for **an alternative.**

What was it that made him be “distressed?”

V. 36: Jesus mentions **the cup.**

He is agonizing over “the cup.” The Cup dominates this story.

What's up with the cup? What's in the cup?

The “cup” is a metaphor for the wrath of God against human evil. (Ps

75:8; Isa 51:17; Jer 49:12)

You see, this is different than just a martyr.

- **Jesus wasn't just another martyr.**
- **He was the sin-bearing substitute that bore the Father's wrath in our place!!**
- **He drank "it to the dregs."**

He took our cup of wrath so that we could drink his cup of salvation.

Jesus looks into this cup and he stares at the horrific reality of his death.

- **He can't even stand upright.**

Praise God, Jesus took the cup!!!

When we stand before God our only hope will be this: Christ died in my place.

36 - Jesus cries out, in his humanity, "Abba, Father, if it is possible take this cup from me."

"Please don't strike the Shepherd."

But there was no other way.

He is alone.

He is shattering.

He is falling to the ground.

He is staggering.

He is bleeding.

He is sweating.

He is looking into the cup and asking "is there an alternative?"

All He hears is silence.

He ultimately died the death we should have died.

That cup should have been in my hand! It should have been in your hand.

He would eventually drink the cup, turned it over and said, “It is finished.”

*Oh, make me understand it, Help me to take it in, What it meant to
Thee, the Holy One, To bear away my sin.*

--Katharine A. M. Kelly

37-41: The agony continues...

**Jesus brought the disciples along, but they can't even stay awake.
Some help!**

37: Jesus calls him “Simon” not Peter” for he is no Rock here.

Not only is he pleading with the Father; but he's pleading *alone*.

- He is surely being tormented by the **evil one**.
- You can imagine the possible lies being whispered... “Really?
**You're going to redeem sinful humanity? Look at yourself? You
look pathetic. Your followers won't even stay awake with you...**”

V. 39: Jesus prays the same thing. “If possible, let this cup pass from me.”

(Matthew 26:44 says three times)

- But this would *not* be like the near death of Isaac, when an alternative was given to Abraham.
- Jesus yields to the Father's will even though it was agonizing.

40: Three times Jesus finds them asleep, a preface to Peter's three denials.

41b-42: There's a shift in mentality.

- Jesus now boldly arises and says you guys get up!
- It's time to do this!
- Hold on to this picture of the transforming effect of prayer.

#3: Arrest and Abandonment (14:43-52)

43: While Jesus was still speaking, Mark says **Judas** came, and once again he underscores that he was “one of the twelve.”

Judas came with **armed crowd from the Sanhedrin.**

- It was like the “temple police.”
- **Roman soldiers** were with them (cf. **John 18:3,12**).

44-45: The Kiss. By prearranged plan, Judas identifies the one they would arrest by giving him a kiss.

46: The authorities take him and arrested Him.

- No charges are made.
- No one really concerned about following a legal protocol. He’s a victim of injustice.

47: Taken by surprise, in a momentary outburst, one of the disciples “drew his sword, struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his ear.”

- **John:** Peter who struck the man, whose name was name **Malchus, a servant of the high priest Caiaphas (John 18:10-14).**
 - He tells Peter: “**Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?**” (**18:11**).
 - It’s not a time for swords. **A different battle is being waged.**
 - **And Jesus will win it by dying.**
- **Luke** tells us a very interesting detail: “Jesus said, ‘**No more of this! And he touched his ear and healed him.**’” (**Lk 22:51**; Also read **52-53**).
 - On the way to the cross, Jesus shows **mercy to this man.**

48: Jesus rebukes the mob for their severe tactics.

- He **not a criminal, nor political revolutionary.**
- They had watched him in the temple. They knew him.
- They could have arrested Him at any previous time.

- **This late night arrest in showed their cowardice.**
- It displayed their **shame**.

It was also a **fulfillment of Scripture**:, “He was despised and rejected by men” (53:3); “He was taken away because of oppression and judgment” (53:8); He “was counted among the rebels” (53:12).

50-52: We see the **total defection of the disciples**—all of them!

50: They all left him and fled.

51-52: In verse 51, we meet the first recorded **streaker**.

- **What is this about?**
- This anonymous “young man” is most likely **Mark**.
- The reason for including it is not to give comic relief, but actually the opposite.
- It’s a picture of **nakedness and shame**.
- It’s John Mark’s way of saying, **“I fled too.”**
- He was apparently nearby, but left when the pressure was on.

The lack of identity actually helps us envision ourselves there.

- This could be us. “We have all turned away” (Roma 3:9-12).
- Amos:“ ‘Even the bravest of warriors will flee naked on that day,’ (2:16)

Two Gardens

Think about two gardens in the Bible.

- **In the Garden of Eden, our shame nakedness is exposed, as we deserted the God who made us and loved us.**
- **In the Garden of Gethsemane, the disciples’ shame is exposed, as they desert the one who loved them and would give His life for them.**
- But this Garden has a word of **hope**.

- The Garden of Eden, **meant death for sinners.**
- The Garden of Gethsemane: **Jesus' death would give life for sinners.**
- **Jesus was the better Adam, who obeyed the Father perfectly.**
- In the first garden, Adam said: "Not Your will but *mine* be done," and all of creation was plunged into sin.
- In this second garden, Jesus, the second Adam, says, "Not My will but *Yours* be done," and the redemption and salvation of all creation begins!
- **Eden brought death.**
- **Gethsemane begins new life.**

Scripture says that you are either in *Adam, or in Christ.*
 There is **no third category!**
 Oh, **be found in Christ! Be united to Christ!**

II. Applying His Suffering

1. The Garden reminds us of our sin and Jesus' grace.

A. We're reminded of the appalling nature of our sin.

It was my sin that held him there.

*Until it was accomplished
 His dying breath has brought me life
 I know that it is finished.*

This is what my sin required. This is what had to happen because of my sin.

- **We should stand here and behold what our sin, our pride, our selfishness, or idolatry, our perversion; this is what it required.**
- **“There is not a single Christian on earth – no pastor, no church member, no elder, no recent convert, no elderly saint – who rightly appraises the vileness of sin.” – Andy Davis**
- **Medieval Theologian, Anselm said, “You have not yet considered the seriousness of sin.”**

B. We're also reminded of the amazing grace of the Savior.

v. 36 – *not what I will, but what you will.*

He drank the cup to the last drop, so that we don't have to drink a drop.

We keep drinking from this cup of grace.

“If you kept a record of sin, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness!” (Ps 130)

Stand amazed at the grace of Jesus, who **couldn't stand up as he prepared for the cross.**

For God so loved the world, that *HE was silent* when the Son appealed for an alternative way!

What love! What grace!

Now, we will never be abandoned!

- **We will never have to wonder if the Father is with us!**
- **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”**

2. The Garden encourages us in our suffering.

Four encouragements in suffering:

A. Know that Jesus can identify with you in your suffering.

Live long enough and you have your own dark hour.

It won't be exactly like Jesus' suffering, but you will have your own Garden moment.

What we gather from this text is that there's no suffering that he can't identify with.

Jesus **knows suffering not simply because He knows everything, but because He is the "**suffering servant.**" He experienced it.**

When you go through those unexpected announcements

- **"The test came back, I have cancer."**
- **"We lost the baby."**
- **"My husband left."**
- **"I lost my husband."**

When you feel abandoned...

When you fall to the ground...

When you can't stop crying...

When your tears become your food...

Remember this: Jesus can identify with you and He will give you grace in your time of need.

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

CJ tells the following story:

The first doctor to die of the Aids virus in the UK was a young

Christian. He contracted Aids while doing medical research in Zimbabwe. He suffered to the point of being unable to communicate with his wife. He struggled with great difficulty to express his thoughts to his wife. She couldn't understand. On one occasion, his wife could not understand his message. He wrote on a notepad, the letter "J." She went through her mental dictionary of words beginning with the letter to no avail. Finally she said "Jesus?" That was the right word. He was with them.

That is all either of them needed to know.

HE IS ENOUGH!

When you only have enough strength to write one letter, He's enough. Luke says that **an angel sent from heaven came and strengthened**

Jesus (Lk 22:43).

But we have someone greater. Jesus Himself strengthens us.

B. **Remember Who You're Praying To: The Father**

Jesus enters his darkest hour in **prayer (32).**

- **"The prayers of Jesus in Mark are all set in times of decision and crises, this being the most traumatic" (Edwards).**

Jesus prays to **"Abba" (36). A term of intimacy, affection and trust.**

- **Do you know to whom you pray?**
- **God is not distant; remote; he is near, he is personal.**

Just as Jesus cried out to Abba in his darkest hour, so we cry out to Abba in our darkest hour.

- **There's a reason you have tear ducts, just like there's a reason you have a mouth, ears, arms, and other body parts.**
- **Learn from Jesus and cry out to the Father during your dark times.**

We have two rebukes regarding prayer in the NT:

- **Selfishness**
- **Prayerlessness – Ask!**

C. **Know that the Father is sovereign over you and is sanctifying you.**

- **Your trial is not purposeless.**
- **If a stranger offers you a little cup with green liquid in it, then you shouldn't take it; but if your Dad says, "Here, drink this. It tastes horrible, but it's good for you" then you take it with faith.**
- **Trust the Father in the midst of suffering. He's in control.**
- **Job, "Though He slay me, I'll trust Him."**
- **Don't waste your suffering. Realize you have opportunity to make much of Jesus in it.**

D. **Remember the end of the story**

- **Jesus knew the end of the story**
- **We know the end of the story. Suffering will give way to glory.**
- **ESPN Classic – It's easier to watch your team come from behind to win if you already know the outcome!**
- **When you're in the midst of suffering, it's easy to despair. But thankfully we have a Bible that reveals the outcome!**

3. The Garden warns us about temptation.

Did Jesus take these guys for support? Or did he take them to teach them?

- **We can't be sure, but I'm guessing this was yet another teaching**

moment.

- They were lousy supporters!

Even in his most agonizing time, Jesus is teaching.

- He's thinking about others.

In hours from this experience, they will face horrific temptations.

Failure happens when we let our guard down, and when we fail to pray.

Unless we **watch and pray** it will happen to us.

- ⁷Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Pet 5:7-8)

Look again at **Jesus example**, not just what he says about watching and praying.



We shouldn't miss this encouraging example: *Prayer has a transforming effect!*

In **verses 41-42** – He rises to do the will of God!

He emerges from Gethsemane & *trembles no more!* “Rise! Let us go!”

“Here comes my betrayer.” We are not going to wait for them – let's go to them!

What explains this transformation?

How do you go from falling on your face because you don't think you can endure? To, “rise let us go!”?

You watch and pray. You spend time with Abba.

Prayer has a transforming effect.

Though the Father was not sending another way, *he gave strength to endure.*

God does the same for us.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10

⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

God didn't take the thorn away from Paul, but he strengthened Him by the all-sufficient grace of Jesus.

What are you facing? What is your loved one facing? Rest in the all-sufficient grace of Jesus.

Marks Two Audiences

1. Suffering Christians in Rome. The persecuted Christians were used as torches, falsely accused, and thrown to wild beasts.

- **They needed to be encouraged by the Suffering Servant.**
- **They needed to know that you can endure your Gethsemane through dependent prayer.**

2. Suffering Christians Throughout the Ages.

- **People like us.**
- **We need to know that we can endure trials, temptations, *and suffering, through Christ. We endure through dependent prayer. We can endure by the grace of Jesus.***

Mark opened this chapter with a picture of a **woman pouring out a years-salary worth of ointment on the head a Jesus**, as a beautiful display of worship to Him.

It was a flashback that he inserted.

It's like Mark is saying, **when you read what's coming next, this should be your response: *Adoration.***

Come, Let us adore Him.

He is Our Cup-Drinking. Savior. What love!
He is our Sympathetic Savior. What comfort!
He is our Praying Savior. Even now, He's interceding for us. What security!

*Man of sorrows, what a name;
for the Son of God who came;
ruined sinners to reclaim;
hallelujah, what a Savior.*

-- Philip Bliss