

In Gethsemane's Garden

Text: Mark 14:27-42

Introduction:

1. The Last Supper being over, Christ and His disciples go to the Garden of Gethsemane. This period on the Eve of the crucifixion can be divided into the following segments:
 - Vs. 26-31 – Christ's prediction to the disciples on the way to the garden.
 - Vs. 32-42 – Christ's agony in the garden described.
 - Vs. 43-50 – Christ's betrayal and arrest detailed.
2. What took place in this garden was deeply significant as it was here that Christ wrestled with the reality of the impending cross and submitted Himself to the Father's will. His consecration would stand in contrast to the weakness and frailty of His disciples whose resolves to stand ended in failure.
3. We will divide the text under three headings for our study.

I. CHRIST'S ADMONITION EN ROUTE TO THE GARDEN (VS. 26-31)

A. Christ's Solemn Prediction (Vs. 27-28)

1. The substance of His Prediction (Vs. 27a)
 - a. 'offended' = means "caused to stumble", "caught in a trap". Their offense would not be in Christ personally but the events of the crucifixion would sorely test their faith.
 - b. Note: It appears Christ issued 2 warnings – one in the Upper Room (Luke) and one on the way to the garden (Matthew and Mark). Peter was particularly a focus of these warnings on account of his self-confidence and leadership amongst the other disciples.
2. The Scriptural basis of His Prediction (Vs. 27b)
 - a. "for it is written" = Christ's prediction was grounded in Scripture. The prophecy Christ refers to here is from Zechariah 13:7 "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man *that is* my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: **smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:** and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."
 - b. "I will smite the Shepherd" = Christ would be smitten for the sheep. This would be in the Divine will of the Father to provide salvation for mankind – "Yet it **pleased the LORD to bruise him**; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days,

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and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.” (Isaiah 53:10)

3. The Solace in the Prediction (Vs. 28)
 - a. “after that I am risen” = Christ again looks beyond the agonies of the cross to the victory of His resurrection. There would be a glorious and victorious end to His sufferings. He would triumph over death!
 - b. “I will go before you into Galilee” = Christ promises a post resurrection appearance. He would not leave His sheep scattered but would re-gather them and commission them to carry out His work.

B. Peter’s Self Assertion (Vs. 29-31)

1. Peter’s Claim (Vs. 29)
 - a. Peter was self-confident – he was trusting of self, believing he was able to face the challenge and succeed. Undoubtedly Peter was absolutely sincere in this claim but sincerity alone does not equal spirituality if not coupled with other principles. Self-reliance will always end in disappointment and failure in the Christian life. God will not bless or honour our self-efforts. The ONLY way to live the Christian life is by reliance upon Christ for EVERYTHING.
 - b. Peter was self-inflated – he claimed that though all the other disciples might desert Christ, he would not. This was shocking pride on the part of Peter to elevate Himself above the other disciples. God in His mercy would allow Peter to experience a real breaking of the self-life in order that he might be a usable vessel. Peter must die to self if Peter would live for Christ.
2. Christ’s Counterclaim (Vs. 30)
 - a. “this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice” = that very night, before dawn would arrive when roosters crow (approx. 3am), Peter would deny Christ 3 times.
 - b. Peter would find out just how weak he actually was. Peter’s strength was actually his weakness. The Christian life works opposite to the way of the world. When you are strong in your natural strength, you are weak spiritually but when you are weak in your natural strength, and dependent upon Christ to live through you, you are strong spiritually (See Gal. 2:20). At this point in time, Peter was really too strong to be used of God in any significant way. Peter would need to be broken.
3. Peter’s Comeback (Vs. 31)
 - a. Christ’s prediction of Peter’s denial, instead of sobering and humbling Peter, made him all the more determined. He now takes his claim a step further, claiming that he was willing to even die for Christ. In just a short time, this strong fisherman

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who had made such a bold claim would melt in fear when questioned by a young maid ('damsel' – John 18:17) of the high priest.

- b. Peter's claim was echoed by the other disciples – "Likewise also said they all."
- c. Note: One of the marks of the authenticity and reliability of Scripture is its plain and honest treatment of the heroes of the faith. Manmade religion tries to air brush the failures of their founders, making them appear almost god-like in perfection. But God's Word reveals both the triumphs and the failures of God's people that we might learn the realities of the Christian walk.

II. CHRIST'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN (VS. 32-36)

A. The Area of the Garden (Vs. 32)

- 1. 'Gethsemane'
 - a. Christ and the disciples leave the upper room and walk out one of the gates of the city, cross the brook Cedron (John 18:1) and walk up the Kidron valley in a North-easterly direction. The time is probably somewhere around midnight; the sun has well and truly set and the blackness of night has come. They come to a garden (John 18:1) located at the foot of the Mount of Olives (Vs. 26; Luke 22:39). This was a favourite place of resort for Christ as John records, "for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples" (John 18:2).
 - b. The word 'Gethsemane' literally means "oil press" as it was here that the olives that grew in this area had been pressed according to the ancient methods. The garden apparently was an olive orchard enclosed with a stone wall and equipped with an oil press. (E. Hiebert)
- 2. Typical significance
 - a. Christ was crushed under the shadow of the cross in Gethsemane to where his sweat was mingled with his blood in great drops and fell to the ground.
 - b. Christ is called the "second Adam". Adam, the first man was defeated by sin and Satan in the first garden and disobeyed His Heavenly Father. Christ, prevailed over sin and Satan in the garden and perfectly submitted Himself to the will of the Heavenly Father. In the first garden paradise was lost, in this garden it was regained for all who will put their faith and trust in Christ.

B. The Anguish in the Garden (Vs. 33-36)

- 1. The Anguish of his heart (Vs. 33-34)

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- a. Described: “sorrowful and very heavy” (Matt. 26:37); “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Vs. 38); “sore amazed and very heavy” (Mark 14:33). His soul was heavy under the crushing weight of our sins. So overwhelming was Christ’s sorrow that it brought him to the brink of death – “My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death” (Vs. 34). “It swept Him to the very limits of His endurance. The whole picture is of an overwhelming agony beyond human comprehension.” (Hiebert)
 - b. Illustrated: “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, **strengthening him**. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were **great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**” (Luke 22:43-44)
 - c. Medical insight: Of medical significance is that Luke mentions Him as having sweat like blood. This has been seen in patients who have experienced, extreme stress or shock to their systems. (Edwards) The capillaries around the sweat pores become fragile and leak blood into the sweat.
 - d. Hebrews 5:7 “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with **strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death**, and was heard in that he feared;”
 - e. W. Graham Scroggie: “The cause of Jesus sore trouble was not physical fear, but the pressure upon his sinless souls of the sin of the world, together with His knowledge of what bearing it involved.” Christ was about to be made sin for us, would bear God’s wrath and for the first time in all eternity, separated from the Father.
2. The Agony of his prayers (Vs. 35-36)
- a. Christ withdraws himself from the disciples by the space of “a stone’s cast” and falls down in fervent prayer, pleading with the Father, “if it be possible, let his cup pass from me: nevertheless **not as I will, but as thou wilt.**” (Matt. 26:39) Mark adds the word ‘Abba’ to the prayer (Mark 14:36). Christ has three such seasons of prayer interrupted by attempts to awaken the disciples to watch and pray.
 - b. The cup: represented all the sufferings of the cross (Compare Mark 14:35 & 36. The ‘cup’ in Vs. 36 corresponds to “the hour” of Vs. 35.) – physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. It is hard for us as sinful creatures to plumb the depths of what it meant for One who was completely sinless and holy to feel the weight of being “made sin for us who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - c. “not what I will, but what thou wilt” = the heart of the prayer. Christ was totally surrendered to the Father’s will.

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- d. Challenge: If Christ was totally and completely submitted to the Father's will, can we offer our God anything less than total surrender?

III. CHRIST'S APPEAL IN THE GARDEN (VS. 37-42)

A. The Specifics of the Appeal (Vs. 37-38)

1. "Simon, sleepest thou?" = This is the first time Peter has been called by his old name since chapter 3:16. This should have been an alert to Peter that he was walking according to the old man.
2. "Watch and pray" = Christ seeks to arouse them out of their slumber to be watchful and prayerful. This was a critical moment and they needed to be spiritually awake.
3. "lest ye enter into temptation" = spiritual vigilance and prayerfulness is needed before temptation strikes. Very often we coast along in spiritual lethargy and then when we are in the grip of a temptation, cry out to God. Sadly, it is often too late as the temptation has got us in its grip. The time to prepare is before the temptation comes!
4. "the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" = Christ puts His finger on the internal struggle they were facing. In spirit, they desired to do what Christ was asking but their bodies were compelling them to do otherwise.
 - a. This conflict is described in Galatians 5:17 "For the flesh **lusteth against** the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." It is like a spiritual tug of war going on in our hearts. The phrase "are contrary the one to the other" according to A.T. Robertson means "lined up in conflict, face to face, a spiritual duel."
 - b. We all need to be aware of the enemy within who will seek to thwart our spiritual progress. If we follow the impulses of the body, we will be very weak, unstable believers – up for the Lord one moment and down the next. The solution is to bring our bodies under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27), deny self (Matt. 16:24), yield to the Spirit rather than the impulses of our sinful flesh (Gal. 5:16), to apply the cross to the self-life (Gal. 2:20; 5:24).

B. The Stubbornness towards the Appeal (Vs. 39-42)

1. "their eyes were heavy" = has the idea of "weighed down". Speaks of the effect of drowsiness upon the eyes.
2. "Sleep on and take your rest: it is enough" = After 3 appeals Christ ceases trying to call them to prayer any longer. One of the most significant opportunities in the lives of the disciples had now expired.

Conclusion: Will it be the Christ life or the self-life for you?