

52. Jesus Prayed in the Garden

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they will sin when they depend on their own strength. In contrast, at the times they yield to Christ, He will give them victory. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus gave an example of the importance of prayer by spending time praying to the Father to prepare for His coming trial and crucifixion.

Jesus, and the disciples, went to a garden, because Jesus wanted to pray to the Father. Mark 14:32-34 says, “Then they came to a place which was named 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 exceedingly sorrowful, *even* to death. Stay here and watch.’” Here, we see that the garden was called “Gethsemane”, which means *oil press*. This garden was on the side of the Mount of Olives, so the garden was named for the place where they squeezed the oil from the olives. The garden was just across a small valley from the temple in Jerusalem, and it took only a few minutes to walk there from Jerusalem.

Jesus often went to this garden to pray when he was in Jerusalem, because John 18:2 says, “And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples.” Jesus left most of the disciples near the entrance to the garden. He said to this larger group of disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” However, he took Peter, James, and John with him further into the garden. We see what Jesus told these disciples in Luke 22:40, where we read: “When He came to the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’” There, they were given the opportunity to see that Jesus began to be troubled and deeply distressed. This distress was not because of the physical suffering Jesus was going to go through. Instead, this distress was due to the fact that He was going to experience separation from the Father and experience the full wrath of God against sin, as He took our sin upon Himself.

Isaiah had predicted, in Isaiah 53:10, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.” Here, we see that Isaiah had predicted the distress Jesus would experience. 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains in more detail, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Here, we see that the Father made Jesus, who had never sinned, to become sin for us. This means that all of our sins were placed on Jesus as He hung on the cross. Mark 15:33-34 says, “Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” The reason why Jesus had to have all of our sins placed on Him was so He could place His righteousness on us at the moment we repented of our unbelief and placed our faith in Him.

After telling Peter, James, and John to pray so they would not enter into temptation, Jesus went a little farther into the garden. Mark 14:35-38 says, “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 indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.’” We see that Jesus was in great agony as He started to pray in the garden.

Luke 22:41-44 says, “And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’ Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Isaiah 51:17 says, “Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of His fury; You have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, *and* drained *it* out.” In Isaiah, we see that Israel would experience the cup of God’s fury against their sin. In an even greater way, Jesus was going to experience the cup of the fury of the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind.

Jesus understood that cup, and that was why He was in great agony as He prayed. That was why He asked the Father that if there was any other way to pay for sin to do so. At the same time, Jesus said, “Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.” Hebrews 10:4-7 says, “For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, “Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.”’” This quote from Psalm 40:6-8 showed why Jesus came to this earth. Jesus knew that He was going to do what animal sacrifices could never do. In John 6:38, Jesus added, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

After praying to the Father, Jesus returned to the place where He had left the disciples. He found Peter, James, and John sleeping. Jesus then asked Peter two very important questions. He asked Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?” The use of Simon, instead of Peter, was the second time that happened that night. A short time earlier, Jesus had said, in Luke 22:31-32, “‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.’” Jesus warned Peter that Peter would deny Him three times as a result of the fact that Satan would sift him as wheat. Peter had boldly answered, because he depended on his own strength, in Luke 22:33, “‘Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.’” When Jesus first met Peter, his name was Simon, but Jesus changed it to Peter which means “a rock”. That night, Jesus used the name Simon, because he would not be like a rock in his own strength.

Jesus asked Peter, and the others, if they could watch and pray with Him for just one hour. Then, Jesus told the disciples why that was so important for them in their own lives. Verse 38 says, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.” Neither the disciples, nor Christians who are living today, can have victory over temptation in our own strength. When we depend on ourselves, we will fail. That was why Jesus told the disciples

to watch and pray. He knew they wanted to do what was right, but Jesus also knew the weakness we all face when we try to do things in our own strength.

Then, Mark 14:39-42 says, “Again He went away and prayed, and 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 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. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.’” Jesus then left the disciples and went away to pray again. Jesus showed, by His example, that the only way to prepare for the attacks of Satan is through prayer.

However, Peter, James, and John did not learn from the example of Jesus. When Jesus returned, they were asleep again. Jesus had warned Peter that Satan had asked to sift him as wheat. Jesus had promised Peter that his faith would not fail, but Jesus had warned him so he could prepare for the testing of Satan. Instead of preparing for the testing of Satan, through prayer, Peter and the others were sleeping. After His first period of prayer, Jesus again reminded them of the need to be alert and pray, so they would not enter into temptation. This also reminds us how to have victory over temptation.

The disciples did not know how to answer Jesus as He left again to go and pray. When Jesus came back the third time, they were sleeping again. This time, Jesus did not remind them to pray. Instead, Jesus told the disciples that it was time to go, because the hour had come. 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” The time to prepare for temptation was past, and the disciples were going to face that temptation in just a few minutes. The disciples would all fail to resist temptation that night. In fact, just a few minutes later, Mark 14:50 says, “Then they all forsook Him and fled.” Without prayer, we will also fail, when we are tempted.

Jesus told the disciples that the time had come and the Son of Man was being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Since there was a small valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, the disciples could have seen people coming, but apparently had not noticed. John 18:3 says, “Then Judas, having received a detachment *of troops*, and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons.” The group that came to arrest Jesus may have numbered between three hundred and six hundred people. A large crowd like that with lanterns and torches would have been very noticeable as they crossed that valley. Jesus then said the betrayer was at hand.

These verses teach a very important lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. Jesus made it clear that we will not have victory over temptation if we fail to pray. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that, when we are facing temptation, the way to have victory over that temptation is to pray.