

the head of the nation. This vision did not prepare them to walk in His footsteps down the footpath of humiliation and frailty. It was quite beyond them to welcome insults, scourging and death without being able to retaliate.

Although these sincere, earnest men immediately abandoned Jesus, just as He predicted, in later life, however, they heroically kept these inconsiderate promises. According to tradition, most did give their lives for Christ. John lived and served unflinchingly until a venerable age. But they triumphed not in their own strength, but in that of the Holy Spirit and by the grace of God, and not unlikely because of Jesus' pre-crisis admonitions here.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. When and where did Jesus predict the disciples' approaching failure: before they all left the Upper Room or after? Or both? Defend your answer.
2. Define the expression: "offended in me." What other texts help interpret it?
3. What prophecy (book, chapter and verse) predicted the scattering of the flock upon the overwhelming of the shepherd? Show how it rightly applies to Jesus and the disciples.
4. According to the above-mentioned prophecy, who would strike the shepherd in question? How would this feature serve to encourage the sheep to remove the despair from their souls?
5. In what picturesque way did Jesus guarantee the certainty of His victory over death?
6. What was Peter's reaction to Jesus' announcement?
7. How did Jesus treat Peter's reaction?
8. What was the reaction of all the other disciples?
9. What time of day is "cockcrowing"?

SECTION 67

JESUS PRAYS IN GETHSEMANE

(Parallels: Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46)

TEXT: 26:36-46

36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray.

37 And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled. 38 Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide ye here, and watch with me. 39 And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt. 40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 42 Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done. 43 And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words. 45 Then cometh he to the disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Arise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Do you think Jesus *needed* to go to Gethsemane? Could He not have remained in Jerusalem to pray just as well? Why go there, then?
- b. Why do you think Jesus set the disciples as sentinels to watch and pray?
- c. If Jesus knew that He had come to earth for precisely this hour, why do you think He prayed, in a sense, that the Father save Him from it? (Cf. Mark 14:35; John 12:27ff.)
- d. Why did that "cup not pass away," contrary to Jesus' request?
- e. Why do you think He requested the presence of Peter, James and John? (1) How would that help Him? (2) How would it help them?
- f. What does Jesus' falling on His face to pray indicate about His feelings?
- g. If Jesus always knew and did God's will (cf. John 8:29), why, if He suspected His suffering inevitable, did He request to be exempt therefrom? What good did He really believe praying might do?
- h. Why did the disciples keep falling asleep, despite the fact that Jesus requested that they stand watch with Him?

- i. In what sense would they have "entered into temptation," if they did not watch and pray? How does watching and praying keep one out of temptation?
- j. Is it true of us that "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"? What *should* we do about it? What *do* we do about it?
- k. Do you think it is ever right to pray the same prayer twice? What about using the very same words to repeat the prayer? Why do you say that?
- l. How do you think Jesus addressed the sleeping disciples, "Sleep on now, take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed . . ."? Was He angry, irritated, astonished, or what? What did He mean?
- m. Do you think Jesus' prayers were answered? If so, when or how?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Then with His disciples Jesus went over the ravine of the Kedron, as He usually did, to a piece of land on the Mount of Olives where there was a garden called "Gethsemane" a word which means "the oil-press." When they arrived there, He told them, "Sit down here while I go over there and pray. Pray that you may not walk right into temptation."

Taking with Him Peter and Zebedee's sons, James and John, He began to show His grief and the deep dread He felt. Then He commented, "I am so completely overwhelmed with grief that I could die right here! Stay here and keep watch with me."

Walking on a bit further by Himself about a stone's throw away, He knelt down. Then He threw Himself face down on the ground and began praying, that, if it were possible, He might not have to face the impending ordeal. He kept saying, "My Father, if it be possible—everything is possible for You. . . . if you are willing, take this painful destiny away from me! However, it is not my will, but Yours, that must be done!"

[Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, encouraging Him. Being deeply anguished, He prayed more urgently. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground.] When He arose from praying, He returned to the disciples and found them sleeping, exhausted by sorrow.

"Simon," He addressed Peter, "are you asleep? Could you men not stand watch with me a single hour? Rise, stay awake and pray,

that you may not be unnecessarily exposed to temptation. Your spirit is certainly willing, but your human nature is frail."

Once more, for the second time, He went away to pray, repeating the same words, "My Father, since it is not possible for my destiny to be changed without my undergoing it, Your will must be done."

When He came back, He found them sleeping again, because they could not keep their eyes open. They did not know what excuse to give Him. So, leaving them again, He went back and prayed for the third time, uttering the same words. When He returned the third time to the disciples, He chided them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! Look, the time has come for me to be turned over to sinful men. Get up, let's get going! Look, here comes my betrayer now!"

SUMMARY

At the gate of the garden Jesus left eight disciples so as to be able to pray relatively undisturbed. Taking with Him His "Inner Circle of Three," Peter, James and John, He urged them to stay awake and pray with Him during His intense crisis of soul. Leaving them, He walked deeper into the garden to pray that God's will might be done without the suffering. Nevertheless, He acquiesced and submitted Himself to accept God's choice. Three times He prayed this and three times He returned to find His men sleeping, not praying. Finally, He roused them once more to go to meet the foe.

NOTES

THE TEMPTATIONS IN THE GARDEN

Many a man has defeated pleasure's allurements only to be broken on the wheel of pain and fear of death. Finding Jesus at His most vulnerable moment, Satan could perceive that his most favorable opportunity had returned. (Cf. Luke 4:13.) The temptation to deviate from the path of obedience and devotion to God was present in *this* garden no less than in the Garden of Eden. The devil could well sense that the destiny of mankind was to be decided in this garden no less than in the first. Contrast the methods and results of the first Adam with those of this last Adam. (Cf. I Cor. 15:22, 45.) It is not surprising, then, that Satan should be present with Jesus in Gethsemane no less than during the wilderness temptations. (Cf. John 14:30.)

THE RIGHT WAY TO SUFFER FOR THE TRUTH

26:36 Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray. On the western slope of the Mount of Olives across the Kedron Valley from Jerusalem was a piece of ground locally called *Gethsemane* which means "olive press." Since the entire hill was famous for its olives, a press would be needed to process them. Was this Jesus' usual camping place during the feast? (Cf. Luke 21:37.) If so, Judas could easily find it (John 18:1f.).

Upon arrival Jesus divided His men into two groups: eight to sit at the entrance and the other three to enter with Him deeper into the olive grove. Was this division to serve His own needs or that of the disciples? Would it have been too shocking for the eight to see His anguish? Or, did they serve as an early warning barrier against premature disturbance? Both groups were charged with the responsibility of praying so as not to fall into temptation (Luke 22:40).

While I go yonder and pray: Jesus Himself attacked His problems, not by anxious pondering or human reasoning, but on His knees. Coming away the Victor, He taught His men the road to triumph. (See Heb. 5:7-10 as Scripture commentary.) What a revelation of their overconfidence: they can sleep, prayerlessly oblivious to the danger. By contrast, the Son of God is so conscious of His own frailty under stress that He must approach temptation with nothing less than concentrated prayer! Jesus' true humanness was never clearer than when He expressed His felt need for prayer.

He set this physical distance between Him and them for one or more of the following reasons:

1. He expected no substantial help from them.
2. He believed their own susceptibility to shock so great that it would be better for them not to observe His struggles.
3. He desired intimacy with the Father which only the distance of isolation could offer.

The loneliness of the struggle

26:37. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled. Until now Jesus had spent all His energies encouraging and instructing the disciples so as not to burden them beyond their strength. Now, however, in the

privacy of the garden with only His inner Three present, He gave way to the deep dread He felt and *began to* express it as never before. These who had been privileged to witness His transfiguration glory (17:1) and His power over death (Luke 8:51; Mark 5:40) must now behold Him horror-stricken, filled with dread and intense emotional agony in the shadow of the cross.

He took with him: Although human companionship is not incompatible with seeking God's fellowship, He obviously felt a loneliness that no other human being could fully share. That He specifically selects these three out of a desire for human sympathy in the midst of suffering, points to a closeness of fellowship and affectionate understanding between the men chosen and Himself.

What are the starkly real temptations Jesus faced that night?

1. If in the wilderness temptations He was allured to end His bodily hunger by acting outside of God's will, could not His human sensitivity to pain recoil from submitting to the torture of crucifixion?
2. He could have called down heavenly fire to destroy all His enemies, indeed all men and cancelled our redemption as a bad idea. Were not the Father's heavenly legions instantly available at His word (26:53)? He could easily have been spared (26:53; John 19:11).
3. He could have taken advantage of the night shadows to flee from Jerusalem, taking refuge in some distant secret hermitage and living out His earthly life in relatively sweet tranquility.
4. He could have completely justified His refusal before any human court. What just human law would have sentenced the Innocent to die for the brutal wickedness and ingratitude of human unbelief?

The fellowship of his suffering

26:38 **Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me.** *My soul* = "I myself in the frailty of my human nature." In a true sense, His whole earthly life had been characterized as one "of sorrows and familiar with suffering," (Isa. 53), but now there is an intense concentration of His affliction. No longer could He say, "My hour is not yet come." Instead, He must now face being publicly branded as a false pretender to the dignity of Messiahship and brutalized as a common criminal. This epitomized His rejection by His own people, Israel. He faced also the shameful penalty for the sins of the whole world. *This* is the vision that overwhelmed Him with sorrow to the point

of death, almost as if He meant, "My spirit is so deeply burdened with sorrow it almost kills me!" If psychological anticipation of death can produce physiological conditions that bring about death, this may explain why God met His Sons's psychological need (Luke 22:43). This crushing agony of anticipation suffered in the garden may also explain why, when some victims of crucifixion linger for days, Jesus died so swiftly on the cross.

In simply coming to earth had He not already endured psychological pain and moral struggles that would have crushed any unblessed mortal? What was the capacity for pain of this sensitive, noble Man? The more sensitive the Sufferer, the more terribly felt the suffering. Beyond mere dread of death common to all fallen man, He was *earth's only Unfallen Man* about to be sentenced undeservedly to the death of a sinner before God's righteous sentence as if His were the accumulated guilt of all our sin. Unfairly and largely unappreciated, He would suffer under the curse of sin, the just for the unjust (Gal. 3:13; I Peter 2:22ff.; 3:18).

But why did He disclose this weakness to His men? While He did not make a great show of His private prayers, neither did He scrupulously and totally hide them, when the witnesses could be taught thereby and share with Him. They must see that His deeply-felt dread proves that He had no ambitious claims to the High-priestly position. Rather, He meekly submitted to His being called by God, qualified and anointed for the task (Heb. 5:4-10). His was the suffering of a real Man. In retrospect, He gave them a model of how rightly to suffer for righteousness.

Watch with me: while they are to pray for themselves, His concern is that they stay awake with Him. Even though these men were no real protection for Him against what He feared, He could derive some comfort simply from knowing that they were watching the approaching storm with Him. By expressing His need of human fellowship, He proved how deeply He is aware of our need for it too (Heb. 4:15). In this meager request we see His sense of isolation which had already begun (John 6:66) and would soon grow (Matt. 26:56) until His abandonment by God (27:46).

The battle with self

26:39 And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me:

nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. To fall on one's face denotes particularly deep earnestness of soul. (Cf. Num. 16:22; II Sam. 12:16; II Chron. 20:18; Neh. 8:6.) To understand this agonizing struggle we must compare His brokenness and prostration here with His poise and power on every other occasion!

By addressing God as *my Father*, Jesus expressed two tremendous truths:

1. His unique relation to the Father: He is a Son of God in a way not shared by any other human being or angel. To Jesus, God is "**My Father**," not "our Father." (Cf. 6:9 notes.) Even though *abba* in Aramaic might be used for both (see Kittel, art. *Abba*, J. Jeremias, *Supplemento al Grande Lessico dei Nuovo Testamento*, Paideia, Brescia, 1968), all of Jesus' revelations of His unique relation to the Father argue that His meaning here is again His unique Sonship.
2. He revealed that His relation to the Lord of the universe is that of a close family. Because "Abba" is Aramaic for "Daddy," this term belonged to the familiar, daily conversation of little children talking with their father. In fact, Jesus' choice deliberately intends to reveal a concept of sonship, and consequently, of fatherhood, that is absolutely new, unheard of in Judaism (J. Jeremias, *Abba*, *op. cit.*). In so doing, He revealed the heart of our Creator. He is not merely an icy-willed Supreme Being, but *my Father*, *Abba*, the highest possible encouragement to approach the Governor of the universe with all the confidence, tenderness and loving trust of a Person whose welcome and audience with God is unquestioned.

If it be possible: Mark has "All things are possible to thee." Luke has "If you are willing." It is easily conceivable that Jesus should have uttered all three expressions, since they are the kind of formulation to be expected of a person suffering and yet praying in earnest, such as He. Because Jesus fully comprehended both the physical and psychological pain awaiting Him (Jn. 18:4) and the great purpose of His entire incarnation, this proviso means, "If there is a way consistent with my mission whereby man can yet be saved." Never did He plunge to the nadir of demanding absolutely and unconditionally that He be exempted. Because He loved us more than Himself, there could be no other way!

God's holy character *could* not and His love *would* not permit any deviation from redemption's pain. Out of this submission come three awe-inspiring conclusions.

1. While Jesus' human instinct of self-preservation is deeply shaken by the dreadful prospect of suffering, His firm resolve to do God's will remains steady, determined. His would be a free-will offering.
2. To save man there is no other way, but the cross of Christ. Had there been some other option, may it not be legitimately argued that His loving heavenly Father would have used it?! This realization uncompromisingly cancels all hope of salvation by any name, law, method, talisman or religion other than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Gethsemane settled it once and for all: He is God's only way back home (John 14:6).
3. If God thought Jesus must endure such engrossing moral pain, then our salvation was neither easy, painless nor cheap. Woe to the Christian who expects his own discipleship to be somehow exempt from risk, sorrow, pain or expense!

Let this cup pass away from me. The *cup* is a Semitism referring to one's lot, whatever God sends be it good or bad. (Cf. Ps. 16:5; 23:5; 75:8; Isa. 51:17-21; Matt. 20:22; Rev. 14:10.) Two views of *this cup* are possible:

1. That awful hour of human weakness and temptation to surrender to His desire to save Himself from the menacing suffering. However, other, later martyrs would show more fortitude and composure than this, fearlessly facing death without flinching.
2. Because He came to "taste death for every one" (Heb. 2:9), He means the entire Passion: Judas' betrayal, the mockery of justice, the pain of scourging and crucifixion, death and burial. It was the intolerable knowledge that most men would not either appreciate His act nor avail themselves of it (Matt. 7:13f.; Luke 18:8). So that we might not have to suffer sin's penalty, He must take our sins in His own body, as if He Himself had committed them (II Cor. 5:21). No human ever suffered this moral pain, nor ever will, because He alone was without sin. To be separated from the Father by this load of guilt would be for Jesus what Hell means to us. (Cf. Isa. 59:2; Eph. 2:1, 12; II Thess. 1:9.) No wonder He begged the Father for the privilege of exemption!

Undoubtedly McGarvey (*Matthew-Mark*, 230) is right to sense a pause in Jesus' prayer between His cry of self-preservation and His

sublime self-renunciation: "there is a pause—a solemn and momentous pause freighted with the destinies of a world." Do we dare believe that our salvation might not have been? Here is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt. This alone is true faith. He trusts God's wisdom alone to know what is best for the race and for Himself. One believes very little about God, if he believes himself most qualified to know what is most needed in every circumstance. Jesus is willing to let God be God and rule His, (Jesus') universe with righteousness and supreme wisdom. His submission both defines and exemplifies true godliness and reverence (Heb. 5:7). Our Lord claimed no special privileges of sonship, but meekly submitted as should any son. And when the Father said "no," He accepted it. Prayer is not a motor for twisting God's arm to overcome His unwillingness, but a transmission that links us to His power to drive us on His missions.

The secret of His victory consists in deliberately choosing to subject His human desire to that of the Father. The victory over death on the cross began with this victory over self, because in it He submitted to the will of the Giver of life. Hence, He marched to the cross, not as victim, but as Victor. His ability to pray this mighty prayer was not the result of a last-minute heroic emotion suddenly blossoming there in the garden, but the set purpose of His whole life (John 5:30; 6:38). *Nevertheless:* with this solitary word He defied the supposedly absolutely compelling demands of circumstances and the undeniable pressures of the world and crucified His own right of self-determination!

How His will could be truly separate from that of the Father shall remain forever a mystery to mankind whose own ignorance of the interrelation between body and spirit does not permit full understanding even of itself. Nonetheless, the distinction between Jesus' human desire to be liberated from His impending suffering and God's will that He die, is a real one. His deity could not interfere with the will of God. Hence, what is manifest in this titanic struggle is Jesus' human instinct of self-preservation wrestling against His desire to do God's will, even if it meant death. Though He was divine, it was in the manner of an entirely human being that He suffered (Phil. 2:5ff.). Therefore, let us not attempt to explain what may well go far beyond our poor powers, but love Him for the great love that bound Him to us enough to go through that ordeal for us.

When best friends do not understand

26:40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? That He *findeth them sleeping* speaks of His discovering what He did not previously know. This fact evidences the limitations of His human knowledge. Had He foreknown each time that they were asleep, He could not have discovered their failure. Even this insight into His limitations increases our appreciation of His suffering.

Sleeping "for sorrow" (Luke 22:45) indicates, not their indifference to Jesus, but their deep love for Him. Grief and the battle fatigue of previous days of campaigning alongside the Lord now took their toll. They could not guess what He was really suffering. The late night hour, coupled with the nervous strain brought on by that evening's heart-breaking revelations, conspired to lull these emotionally exhausted spiritual sentinels to sleep.

Nevertheless, Jesus' reaction proves they could have stayed awake, if they had but besought God for power to overcome the grief that drained them so. *What?* expresses Jesus' disappointment and His words hit home. Although Peter had sworn to stand beside the Lord in prison or in death, he was anything but a Rock now. (See on 16:18; cf. John 1:42.) Shortly after, he would lunge wildly forward in a mad suicidal defense against a superior military force. Now, however, he lacked the stimulation to prove dependable in an isolated prayer vigil when Jesus really needed him. Already warned of his approaching failure, Jesus warns him once more. But none of the others (*ye*) proved steadfast either.

The problem and its solution

26:41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He personally knew what a deadly peril *temptation* was. If He, earth's Perfect Man, senses His own human frailty when face to face with the strain of the supreme demands of obedience to God, how much more so should His drowsy disciples! So He urgently repeated to the inner Three the admonition to the eight disciples upon leaving them at the garden gate. (Cf. Luke 22:40.) Although theoretically, they now hear it twice, to their own damage they failed to heed it even once. *That you enter not into temptation* means "that you not walk right into unexpected trials without realizing you find yourself in such a situation." Their susceptibility to trials could be tragically fatal to their discipleship. (See on

26:31.) Hence, He graciously points to the source of their collapse. Therefore, staying away from temptation is dependent upon the close cooperation of two factors:

1. *Watch*: personal alertness which recognizes one's own vulnerability in time and consequent need for grace. Otherwise, one begins to entertain temptation as a welcome guest, until the will to resist is itself overcome. "Constant vigilance is the price of liberty."
2. *Pray*: dependence upon the leadership, power and protection of God. It also involves the constant submission of one's desires—temptation's target (James 1:14f.)—to the will and direction of God. Such prayer is not intended to eliminate all temptation per se, because this would mean to compromise man's freedom to desire. Rather, it pleads for strength to overcome what cannot be avoided. In the present case it was the disciples' own imperfect understanding of Jesus' Kingdom that was the source of their failure. Therefore, such praying must reorient the mind to let God's wisdom decide their worldview. Had the disciples done this, they would not have been scandalized by Jesus' apparent inability to save Himself from what they assumed was a one-way trip to disaster. He wants them safeguarded by concentration on God, just as He was.

His justification for this admonition lies precisely in the vulnerability and tension created by man's complex nature: *the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*. (Cf. Gal. 5:17.) By *spirit* Jesus means our intellect, emotions, will and conscience. *Flesh*, then, refers to the basic instincts and emotions of our bodily human nature. (Remember Isa. 40:6-8; cf. *sàrx* in I Cor. 1:29; Gal. 2:16.) These men were not sleeping because of indifference, but due to emotional and physical strain. Hence, we are tempted to believe that, because our *spirit* is eager to do the right, we are necessarily *completely* committed to it. Unfortunately, our emotions, our body needs, our instincts, especially the basic instinct of self-preservation, may easily override our spiritual commitment. This weakness of *the flesh* regularly exposes us to temptations that overrule our most ardent commitment to the most truly orthodox convictions.

In this explanation of human vulnerability, can it be doubted that Jesus also included Himself, speaking of His own *spirit* and *flesh*? (Jesus has no total depravity doctrine in mind. For Him, *the flesh is weak*, not utterly dead.) Just as He had met decisive temptations at the beginning of His ministry, He must again meet

this last, decisive assault which pitted the natural instincts of His *flesh* against the commitments of His *spirit*. Just as the disciples' *flesh* was overcome by emotional weariness despite their protestations that their *spirit* was faithful, His *flesh* was rebelling against pain and death itself, even though His *spirit* was perfectly ready to do God's will. So, in His incarnation He faced problems and temptations common to us all. This imposed on Him the limitations of our human predicament too. So, if the Son of God needed such spiritual power to overcome, how much more do mortals such as we?!

Some see His gentle rebuke as Jesus' loving apology for their human weakness. He, the offended One, mercifully covered their offense with an explanation that in itself is amazingly helpful and edifying. Even so, His warning must not be an excuse for our indifference, but a bracing warning to be alert.

In these two verses are brought into play three elements of His own prayer model (6:9f.): 1. God is addressed as *Father*. 2. *Thy will be done*. 3. "that you enter not into temptation" echoes "Lead us not into temptation."

He who stood firm against the temptation to do or be anything but God's man in the crisis that night was the only one who watched and prayed. The others panicked and fled.

The victory over self

26:42 **Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done.** He repeated the substance of the previous prayer (Mark 14:39). But in stating His former prayer negatively, there is now a subtle distinction in meaning. Jesus now assumes as settled that *this cannot pass away*. And, since He could have no doubt that the Father heard Him (John 11:42), the fact that His suffering was continuing already answered His first prayer, *as you will*. God had responded in the negative. Therefore, in His consenting to the impossibility, Jesus begins to drink the cup on this note of true, self-denial, not out of the bitter resignation of a false martyrdom but because it was the Father's will.

While Jesus rightly prayed, "All things are possible to you," the Father's range of options was not limitless, because of the moral nature of God and man, the requirements of divine justice and the

consequent redemption. God could not do absolutely all things, because He had limited Himself. How agonizingly painful it must have been for our Father to have to say "No," His own heart broken by the choice between sinful man and His own dear Son!

But if His submission is already totally settled, why, then, did He yet pray a third time? He was reiterating and confirming to Himself and God what He had so resolutely decided earlier.

26:43 And he came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. His continuing to return to them proves His longing for friendly support. Undoubtedly, He was also anxious that they overcome through prayer and be valiant during the trial about to break upon them. Evidently, Jesus spoke again, but "they did not know what to answer Him" (Mark 14:40; cf. Mark 9:6).

26:44 And he left them again, and went away, and prayed a third time, saying again the same words. Just as Paul prayed the same prayer three times and received a negative response from God with the assurance that "My grace is sufficient for you" (II Cor. 12:8ff.), so also Jesus chose to glorify God through weakness. When Jesus appeared weakest because of insults, hardship, persecution and calamity, the power of God shone most brilliantly in Him. This *saying again the same words* has nothing to do with repetition of empty, fixed liturgical forms in prayer. (Cf. 6:7.) His complaint was against words empty of meaning and hearts unaware of God. Rather, His own repetition here is precisely the opposite, expressing deep intensity of His feeling as He continues to deal with the same soul-piercing problem. (Cf. I Kings 17:20f.)

26:45 Then cometh he to the disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. The command in 26:46 to rouse themselves stands in direct opposition to this (supposed) command to the disciples to *sleep on now and take your rest* (v. 45), because there, Jesus argues that they should get moving, rather than go to sleep. How should we interpret the verb form in question? Further, Mark (14:41) inserts a short word at this point (*apéchei*) that challenges translators and leaves our quandary basically unsolved. Two major interpretations seem appropriate:

1. "It is enough" from a commercial technical term meaning "to receive a sum in full and give a receipt for it" (Arndt-Gingrich, 84).
2. "He (or perhaps: it) is distant." (See Johnson-DeWalt, *Mark*, 424.) Whatever danger for which they should stay awake is far enough away to justify a short rest before it arrives.

Sleep on now and take your rest, expressed in Greek as a second person plural verb, is ambiguous, because the form of the verb could be either indicative or imperative, i.e. either a statement, even expressed as a question, or a command.

1. If it is a command, the circumstance indicated by Jesus in the last half of the verse makes it sadly ironic: "Try to keep asleep *now* and get a good night of rest! It just so happens that I am going to be betrayed in the next 15 minutes!" Their indifference to their own spiritual danger as contrasted to their alertness to physical peril shown in their reactions merits this rebuke. Accordingly, Mark's expression may mean: "Enough of my scolding you for past weakness! We have other problems now. Here come Judas and his cohorts."

Similarly, others would see this expression as a sad question expressed in the indicative mood: "Are you continuing to sleep, although I have urged you to wake and pray?" Mark's expression, then means, "Enough [of your attempts to sleep and my efforts to wake you]!"

2. Another view sees this as a paradoxical concession: "Go ahead and sleep now, because, so far as I am concerned, I can no longer use you to watch with me." This accuses them of indifference to Jesus' needs. Mark's expression then means: "Enough [of your watching with me]. I cannot use your help any longer, because the time has passed for that."
3. McGarvey (*Matthew-Mark*, 231) believes in the first phrase Jesus concedes, while in the second, having just noticed the near arrival of the enemy. He rapidly changes the subject. This is the expression of strong emotion that looks at the question first from His point of view, then from theirs.
4. Others, sensing the strident contrast between His comforting them to sleep and His two urgent statements: *Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*, posit an unstated, undefined lapse of time after Jesus' *Sleep on now, and take your rest*, or perhaps after 26:45. This is a real concession to their weakness, as if He meant, "There is a bit of time left for getting some rest before the storm" (*katheùdete tò loipòn*: "Sleep for the remainder of the time"). So they drop off to sleep again. Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 920f.) marvels over Jesus' compassion:

The Shepherd, who has been asking the disciples to watch with him, is now tenderly keeping vigil over them. His own victory

having been won, perfect peace has been restored to his own heart. He has been strengthened through prayer. To be sure, the three men had failed him. But never, no never will his love fail them! What we have here, accordingly, is one of the most touching pictures in the Gospels, and one, moreover, that is entirely in harmony with the sympathetic character of the Savior.

He may have sat quietly thinking while they slept on until the coming of the soldiers. Then, to give them the common courtesy of facing their foe awake and on their feet He aroused them with Mark's expression, "It is enough," meaning that their period of rest was finished.

Either way, they had missed their unique opportunity to be of any use to Jesus at His greatest hour of need for human help. His moment of frailty has passed. Their moral support is no longer needed, because He is now serene and self-possessed, ready to meet death face to face and win.

The son of God goes forth to war
a kingly crown to win

26:46 Arise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me. Our Lord, fully aware of what would befall Him, boldly presented Himself to be our sacrifice! Such tranquility and courage proves that Jesus' prayer was answered. Rather than remove His suffering, God gave Him strength to bear it. He arose from cringing and crying to face the grim battle of the ages. This is the purpose of praying: that while kneeling before God we may find the marvelous resilience and moral power to attack life's problems head-on. Only after such prayer comes victory.

Behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me. The bobbing pinpoints of torch-light may have become discernible in the distance as the numerous arresting party poured out of Jerusalem. Perhaps Jesus could already hear the hushed murmur of voices, the clank of weaponry and the tread of boots on the rocky pathway leading to the garden. So He speaks with urgency, lest the drowsy disciples be totally unprepared for what must follow.

In an age where even religious activities are geared to stroking our feelings and coddling our sentiments in order to make us feel good in

our sins, we must look to Jesus! In a day when we are instructed to find a life-style that feels good, we must remember that He could say "NO!" to His impulses in order to save us from our certain destiny. When, in order to assuage our sense of guilt, sentimental songs of self-congratulation take the place of God-centered hymns, when chummy pep-talks feebly supplant life-changing messages that exalt the living God and stir us to responsible action, we must look to Jesus! He did not *feel like* going to the cross for anyone. It is to *this* role-model that we are called (Rom. 8:29; I Peter 2:21; I John 2:6; John 13:15).

FACT QUESTIONS

1. List the events that led up to the prayer in Gethsemane.
2. By what general route did Jesus arrive in the garden? Locate Gethsemane. What does this word mean?
3. How did He organize Himself and His men in order to achieve premium opportunity for prayer?
4. What various emotions are attributed to Jesus during this scene?
5. What personal admonitions did He give the disciples for their spiritual protection?
6. Explain the meaning of "watch with me."
7. List and explain the various petitions Jesus included in His prayer.
8. What "cup" did Jesus ask the Father to remove?
9. What reproof did Peter deserve from Jesus?
10. Explain the relationship between watching and praying, then indicate how these protect a person against temptations.
11. How does one "enter into temptation"?
12. Explain why the disciples' "eyes were heavy."
13. How many times did Jesus repeat His prayer?
14. What final rebuke did the disciples merit for their sleeping?

SECTION 68

JESUS IS ARRESTED

(Parallels: Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12)

TEXT: 26:47-56

47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief