

Message #93

Matthew 26:31-46

When it comes to dying, all must die alone. However, when most people die, they are surrounded by family and friends who love them and stay with them. That was not true with Jesus Christ. His final hours were very lonely and very dark. As we come to this text in the life of Jesus Christ, we come to a passage that truly emphasizes, as G. Campbell Morgan said, the loneliness of the King. The primary point of this passage is this:

THE REDEMPTIVE WORK THAT JESUS CHRIST HAD TO ACCOMPLISH ON THE CROSS WAS AN EXTREME LONELINESS WITHOUT ANY SUPPORT FROM THOSE CLOSEST TO HIM.

There is a Psalm that has been called the Gethsemane Psalm. Many scholars believe that Psalm 102 is part of the prayer that Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. As we read this Psalm, verse 7 says, “I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.”

PART #1 – The prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ. **26:31-32**

Jesus Christ reveals something here that is often overlooked—“all” will fall away because of Jesus Christ. It would not just be the Apostle Peter who would stumble and not defend Christ; it would be all of them. Now probably the most shocking piece of information given here is that this was all prophetic truth. Jesus quotes Zech. 13:7 as showing that their desertion was a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy, a scattering of sheep. Everything about the life and death of Christ was precisely scripted by God. It is interesting that Jesus quotes many times in Matthew from the book of Zechariah. This is no coincidence, since as Ryrie said, Zechariah predicts more about the Messiah than any other prophet except Isaiah (Ryrie, *NASB*, p. 1460).

Now this certainly would have been depressing news for these disciples, but carefully notice **verse 32—their abandonment of Him would not mean His abandonment of them.** He told them that after He had been raised, He would go ahead of them to Galilee, which means He would keep them and use them even though they had failed Him.

PART #2 – The emotional response of Peter. **26:33-35**

Peter immediately responded by saying, “all” others may fall away, but not me. Peter’s problem is twofold: 1) He is not honest with himself; 2) He has self-confidence in himself. These are two things that will ruin any person. Be delusional with yourself and have strong self-confidence in your own abilities and strength and you will go down in a hurry. Jesus informed Peter that before daybreak, before the rooster would crow, Peter would deny Him three times. Notice how Peter responds to the Lord God (**v. 35**); basically He says, “You don’t know what you are talking about.” Peter said I will die with you and will not deny you and all the other disciples said the exact same thing. These disciples lived in a state of spiritual denial, which actually led to their literal denial.

PART #3 – The lonely experience of Jesus in Gethsemane. 26:36-46

Notice the adverb “then” that begins **verse 36**. What this means is that immediately after the response of the disciples claiming they would always be loyal to Him, immediately after their confident boasting, this Gethsemane scene occurred. Jesus went to the garden and at the entrance to it He left eight disciples and took three—Peter, James, and John—with Him deeper into the garden to pray. Gethsemane means “oil press” and many commentators observe the place is loaded with olive trees.

Prayer Session #1 - 26:36-41

Verse 37 says that Jesus began to be “grieved” and “distressed.” Those two words mean that Jesus was at a terrible emotional low. In **verse 38**, Jesus asks the disciples to do two things in view of His pending death: 1) Stay put; 2) Keep watch with Him. That word “watch” means to be awake, be alert, and stay alive to the things of God (Smith, p. 96). Now **verse 39** says Jesus went a little beyond them and prayed “If possible let this cup pass from Me, but nevertheless, not My will but Your will be done.” Now the cup Jesus is referring to is the cup of His suffering and what is in the cup is our sin. He is facing the divine reality that the time had come for Him to endure the wrath of God for our sin. This would mean that our sin would be imputed to Him. He who knew no sin would become sin for us. This would also mean that His own Father would have to turn His back on His own Son. After this first session of prayer, Jesus went back to His disciples and notice **verse 40**—they were sleeping. These men could not spare one hour of their lives for Him, when He was about to die for them. These who said they would stay with Him to the end could not watch with Him the moment He needed them the most. So **verse 41** says He told them to keep watching and praying so that they would not enter into temptation because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. **Now let us clearly understand this point—staying awake and alert and being a person of prayer is a key to victory over temptation.** Also notice that Jesus says the flesh is weak. There are many believers who see themselves as strong in their flesh, contrary to what God says about it—our flesh is weak. It will fail us. The key to victory is staying awake and alert to the things of God and being a person of prayer.

Prayer Session #2 - 26:42-43

A second time He prayed honestly, I would like this cup to pass away, but if it cannot, your will be done. Again He went back to His disciples and they are sleeping again. This time He doesn’t wake them. This is the loneliest moment of Christ’s life. He doesn’t have one person who is with Him.

Prayer Session #3 - 26:44-46

Jesus went a third time into prayer and prayed the same way. Then He went back to His disciples and woke them and said it is time to go; it is time for Me to be betrayed. None of us can ever grasp the loneliness of that night. Why would Jesus go through all of this? In Zech. 13:9 we get our answer—so He could bring God’s people to their inheritance. The Shepherd would be struck down, the Sheep would scatter; but the Shepherd would take His flock to their eternal destiny.