

终极的属灵挣扎与得胜——马可福音 14:32-42

The Ultimate Spiritual Struggle and the Victory—Mark 14:32-42

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture Reading: Mark 14:32-42; Hebrews 5:7-10; Hebrews 4:14-16

Mark 14:32-42 (NASB1995)

32 They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed.” 33 And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. 34 And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.” 35 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. 36 And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.” 37 And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 And 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. 42 Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

- The Bible says Christians are in a warfare between the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), so we should expect to encounter frequent spiritual struggles of varying degrees and forms. When we wake up in the morning and the Spirit reminds us to read the Bible, but the flesh just wants to check on the cell phone, then saying no to cell phone and reading the Bible becomes a spiritual struggle. When the Spirit reveals our sin but the flesh doesn't want to acknowledge it, then confession and repentance becomes a spiritual struggle. When the Spirit reminds us to be gentle and patient with others but the flesh only wants to force our way in the crudest and harshest manner, then loving communication becomes a spiritual struggle.
- Theoretically speaking, Christians have God's promise to triumph in every struggle by relying on God, that we never have to fail or stumble.

1 Corinthians 10:13 “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”

- However, the reality is that we often fail to find that way of escape, so we end up failing to endure temptation and finding ourselves sinning against God. Where is the promised way of escape? How can we find the way God has prepared for us so we can overcome spiritual struggles triumphantly? Jesus has left us a great example to follow.
- Outline:
 - Title: The Ultimate Spiritual Struggle and the Victory—Mark 14:32-42
 - 1. The Place of Prayer (v.32a)
 - 2. The Priority of Prayer (vv. 32b-35a)
 - 3. The Pleading of Prayer (vv.35b-36)

4. The Perseverance of Prayer (vv. 37-41)
5. The Power of Prayer (v.42)

The Place of Prayer (v.32a)

- "Gethsemane": Literally "olive press", that is, the place where olive is pressed into oil, or, simply, an olive garden. There are many olive gardens on the Mount of Olives, so there's nothing special about this garden, except.....

John 18:2 “ Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.”

This was a special gathering place for Jesus and his disciples during the last week, away from the crowds, where they could spend quality times together in teaching, fellowship, and concentrated prayer. As usual, Jesus came here to pray and seek God.

【Principle】 This is the daily routine of His worship life. No matter where He goes, he always finds a quiet place to pray and seek God.

【Application】 Do you have such a place? Where is your Gethsemane? To me, my Gethsemane is my bedroom. That's where I read the Bible and pray to prepare myself for a new day of serving the Lord.

The Priority of Prayer (vv. 32b-35a)

- “Sit here until I have prayed.”: Not just sit and wait, but Jesus expected them also to spend the evening in prayer.

Luke 22:40 “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

Jesus knew if they did not pray, they would fall into the temptation of Satan.

Jesus Himself tackled temptation by prayer because he was as truly human as we are. But at the same time, there are some fundamental differences between Jesus' temptation and our temptation that we should know.

【Contrast】 Our temptation is due to the power of sin; Jesus' temptation was due to the power of holiness. We are tempted because of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; Jesus was tempted because He is Holy Holy Holy and cannot embrace sin. We struggle to overcome our sin nature in order to embrace holiness; Jesus had to work hard to overcome holiness in order to embrace our sin. Our struggle is to hold on to God; Jesus' struggle is to let go of God so God may pour out His anger on Him. Our victory is to stand firm and not sin, Jesus' victory was to become sin, to embrace sin, and to bear the penalty of sin for us.

【Gospel】 This is a struggle we can never fully understand, but it is exactly the key of the gospel. Only such a perfect sacrifice can completely solve the problem of sin for us; and only by relying on His saving work which He accomplished single-handedly and perfectly can we have full assurance of salvation and not fall into the trap of trying to earn salvation by our own performance.

- “He took with Him Peter and James and John”: The purpose is to teach them the lesson of prayer.

【Insight】 Even though Jesus knew they would fail, He still led them here to experience this failure. The disciples would learn this lesson of prayer the hard way from the contrast between how they'd fail and how Jesus would succeed.

- "He began to be very distressed and troubled": What distressed and troubled Him the most is the thought that His pure, holy, and sinless heart would bear all the filthy sins of all believers. All selfish and evil thoughts, emotions, desires, words, and actions—all these filthy things would be smeared all over on a pure and innocent heart.
- "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death": This is not an exaggeration. Jesus was under so much stress that he suffered an extremely rare condition called hematidrosis. If God did not send an angel to strengthen him, he might've literally bled to death (Luke 22:43-44).
- "He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground": He left the three disciples behind, for he needed to be alone in prayer, no distraction, just focusing on seeking the Father for help.

【Principle】 When we find ourselves in spiritual pits so deep that no one can reach down to us, even the most loyal and closest friend cannot provide the help we need. Only by calling out directly to God in prayer can we obtain directly the spiritual strength we need from God to face the kind of spiritual struggle that only God and ourselves know.

The Pleading of Prayer (vv.35b-36)

- "If it were possible, the hour might pass Him by": Perhaps God may have another way to accomplish salvation that bypasses the cross. This is almost unbelievable! With Jesus' knowledge of the Bible, such a prayer is almost unthinkable! He clearly knew that God's will was the cross! (c.f. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; John 3:14-15; 12:32-33, etc.)

【Explanation】 This prayer does not involve any sinful weakness, but purely reflects the weakness of Jesus' true humanity. Perhaps he thought of the prayer of Moses in the Old Testament. When God announced His will to Moses that He would wipe out the entire nation of Israel in anger, Moses prayed earnestly to intercede for the Israelites, and God indeed held back His anger and did not wipe them out. Sometimes, God reveals only part of His will so as to stir up His people to pray earnestly, and through their prayer, He'd then give a fuller revelation of His will. Perhaps Jesus had a similar kind of hope here.

Hebrews 4:15-16 "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

- "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will": Every word here is an example for us to follow! "Abba, Father" expresses childlike trust; "remove this cup from Me" expresses the mountain-moving kind of faith; "all things are possible for you" is the basis of faith; "yet not what I will" is the humble admission of one's own limitations; "but what you will" is seeking God's will and rejoicing in God's will.

The Perseverance of Prayer (vv. 37-41)

- "Found them sleeping": They fell asleep "because of sorrow" (Luke 22:45). They tried to numb their souls by sleeping it out.

【Contrast】 Both Jesus and the disciples felt sorrow. Jesus' sorrow drove Him into fervent prayer, while the disciples' sorrow drove them into deep sleep.
- "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation": Sorrow is no excuse. At such a critical moment, you must keep watching and praying.
- "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak": If you know your flesh is weak, you'll know you must pray and ask God for help. The disciples here ignored prayer precisely because they did not know their flesh was really all that weak (c.f. verse 31).
- "Again He went away and prayed...And again He came ...And He came the third time,...the hour has come": Jesus received enough strength through three rounds of prayer, while the disciples received none and had no more time to pray. Their failure was a fixed certainty.

The Power of Prayer (v.42)

- "Get up, let us be going": Jesus did not wait for Judas to arrive, but took the initiative and walked toward him. He had obviously gained enough strength to face the suffering ahead. Jesus walked firmly toward victory, while the disciples walked faintly toward failure.

Summary

Both Jesus and the disciples went through a difficult spiritual struggle. Jesus gained full victory, while the disciples had a total failure. Why?

The disciples entered this struggle full of self-confidence. Even when circumstances caused them much sorrow, they still believed they could handle it. Self-confidence produces spiritual lethargy; spiritual lethargy kills prayer; and without prayer, the result is certain failure.

Jesus entered this struggle fully aware of His human weakness. Jesus knew he was totally unable to face the suffering ahead on his own. Awareness of weakness produces spiritual vigilance; spiritual vigilance drives urgent prayer; and the final result is perfect victory.