

## **Luke 22:39-53 Jesus on the Mount of Olives**

Jesus and the disciples had just finished the Last Supper. After the meal, Jesus led the disciples to a familiar spot on the Mt. of Olives. Luke doesn't mention the name of the place, but we know it was the Garden of Gethsemane.

Many Bible students have noticed the fact that man fell into sin in a garden, and Jesus begins his work of atonement for sin in a garden. The first Adam gave in to temptation in a garden, while Jesus, the "last Adam" (1 Cor 15:45), overcame temptation in a garden. Human sin began in a garden, and Jesus begins the process of solving the problem of sin in a garden. It's only because Jesus succeeded where Adam failed that we have the hope of eternal life.

The disciples did not respond well to this situation. They failed to "watch and pray" with Jesus, Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, and a bit later, Peter denies Jesus three times. So the disciples don't acquit themselves well here. Their weaknesses and failures are on open display in this passage.

Besides spiritual failures, another key theme to watch for here is prayer. Jesus urges the disciples to pray, and he agonizes in prayer. We should follow Jesus' example here rather than the example of the disciples.

Especially when we face times of temptation and testing, we must make time for prayer. And our attitude in prayer should be the same as our Lord: "not my will but thine be done." Jesus faithfully followed the will of God, and so should we.

We have two main events in this text: Jesus and the disciples pray, and Judas betrays Jesus.

Let's go through the text and consider what happens.

### I. .40-46 Jesus and the disciples pray.

After the Last Supper, Jesus leads the disciples out to the Mt. of Olives to a place called the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke calls it "the place," vs. 40). Keep in mind that Jesus knows exactly what is about to happen. If he wanted to avoid arrest, he easily could have done that. He goes out to the very place that is the most dangerous for him, knowing what's going to happen there.

#### A. .40, 45-46 The disciples prayed.

Because of the imminent crisis, Jesus called the disciples to pray for spiritual strength. They would need spiritual strength for the trial/crisis that was about to happen.

1. .40 They should pray that they would not “enter into temptation.” I.e., that they would be able to persevere faithfully in the coming crisis.

In the coming trial, they had the opportunity to respond in faith or with a lack of faith. Jesus urges them to pray for strength to endure this trial faithfully.

**App:** That principle still applies today. We can face our trials and tribulations with faith or with a lack of faith. We can allow the trials to weaken us, or we can persevere faithfully through the trial. And prayer is often the key to our response. We should face our trials with prayer and faith.

2. .45-46 They fell asleep “from sorrow.”

- a) I think they probably prayed for a while. But remember that this is rather late at night, probably a bit past midnight. They’d just eaten supper. Another Gospel writer says “their eyes were heavy.” They naturally felt sleepy. Have you ever tried to pray when you are sleepy? It’s hard.

- b) Also, the disciples had just been reminded about Jesus’ imminent death. Perhaps they were depressed because Jesus had told them that he would die.

- c) In any event, instead of praying, they fell asleep. Perhaps one reason the disciples did so poorly when the crisis hit was that they failed to watch and pray.

**App:** Likewise, when we fail to pray during a crisis, it becomes more probable that we will fail to respond properly. Lack of prayer can lead directly to spiritual disaster.

On the other hand, it’s hard to fall deeply into sin when you have a vibrant, regular prayer life. Usually, when a person falls into sin, one of the first things to go is regular prayer. We all ought to be praying so as not to fall into temptation.

- B. .41-42 Jesus prayed.

1. He prayed kneeling. It’s interesting that Jesus knelt down to pray. The Bible doesn’t demand any particular posture in prayer, but kneeling down provides a sense of urgency or fervency to prayer. Jesus’ prayer is about to get very intense, and kneeling is an appropriate position to take for fervent, intense prayer.

2. .42 He prayed for the cup to pass.
- a) The “cup” is the suffering that Jesus would endure in the coming hours as he faced arrest, torture, and crucifixion.
  - b) From a *human* perspective, Jesus would rather have avoided the agony of the cross. Jesus was fully human, and his human nature would have wanted to avoid the pain and suffering he knew he would endure.
  - c) From a *divine* perspective, Jesus knew what he had to do. He submitted to the divine plan. Jesus came into the world to fulfill this plan, and he did not turn away from it.

3. .42 He prayed for God’s will to happen.
- a) Both the beginning and the end of the prayer demonstrate Jesus’ submission to the will of God. Jesus was determined to do the will of God no matter what the cost.
  - b) The great temptation here was to avoid the cross. Whereas the first Adam failed and gave in to temptation, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam succeeded because he submitted himself to do the will of God.

**App:** Our prayers should likewise acknowledge that we submit ourselves to the will of God. The Bible encourages us to make our requests to God, but we do that in submission to God’s will.

1Jo 5:14 *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

Jas 4:15 *[We] ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.”*

Prayer is not an effort to get our will done; it’s an effort to get God’s will done—“thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

4. .43 He prayed with the help of an angel. Angels are messengers from God, and the appearance of this angel shows that God is directly involved in this process. That angelic visitation enabled Jesus to persevere in fervent prayer.
5. .44 He prayed fervently. Jesus is “in agony” here, even before his arrest and crucifixion. He knows what he’s about to endure, and it cause him great anguish.

- a) His prayer was so intense that “his sweat was as it were (ὡσεὶ) great drops of blood falling to the ground.” Jesus is engaged in a titanic struggle or contest, almost like an athlete struggling in a wrestling match.

Extreme anguish can cause a physical condition whereby blood can mingle with sweat. Some of the ancient writers talk about how a crisis situation can bring about a bloody sweat. Doctors even have a medical word describing this condition—*hematidrosis*. So sweat mingled with blood is physically possible.

But notice the language here: it says that his sweat was “as it were” (i.e., like) drops of blood. It doesn’t say that he was sweating blood. He may have been, but the language is somewhat unclear about that.

- b) In any case, Jesus’ suffering begins at this point; he’s in agony. Even before he was nailed to the cross, Jesus began his painful ordeal. This is the beginning of the process of the Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep.

**App:** Jesus urged the disciples to pray while he was praying. This should tell us that prayer is an important part of the Christian life. Especially as we face crisis situations, in the midst of our temptations and trials, we must “watch and pray.” Following Jesus’ example, our prayer must be persistent, fervent, and submitted to the will of God.

The disciples failed to watch and pray, and that led to further failures. In our times of trial and crisis, we must not make the same mistake. Sometimes all we can do is watch and pray. We have no power to control events. So all we can do is appeal to God to intervene. All we can do is ask God for strength.

Sometimes, simple human weariness or exhaustion can prevent us from praying as we should. It’s easy to put off prayer for later because we are too tired. In times like that, we must persist in prayer in spite of our weariness.

Don’t feel too bad if you fall asleep while praying. That’s not a bad way to fall asleep.

We see here that prayer provided strength to Jesus for the ordeal he was about to endure. Prayer can do that for us as well. We should follow Jesus’ example in praying persistently, fervently, and humbly. People who pray that way rarely cave in to temptation; they handle the trials of life faithfully.

**Will God send** an angel to minister to us? Maybe not a *supernatural* angel, but maybe a human one. Maybe God will send a person to you to help you through your trial; maybe that's how he'll minister to you.

II. .47-53 Judas betrays Jesus.

Jesus had urged his disciples to pray lest they enter into temptation, and while he was yet speaking, the hour of temptation or trial has arrived.

**Quote:** Jesus, who had struggled in prayer, comes to this encounter in a state of composed mastery; his disciples, who have been sleeping rather than praying, face the ordeal with agitation and [misunderstanding].<sup>1</sup>

That could happen to us as well if we fail to pray.

A. .47 Judas arrived with a mob to arrest Jesus.

1. It's interesting that Luke calls Judas "one of the twelve." He'd enjoyed all the privileges of the other disciples. He'd heard all the teaching and seen the miracles of Jesus. Yet he was the betrayer; he was about to commit a terrible crime against his supposed Lord.
2. Remember that Judas had left the Last Supper earlier in the evening. He must have coordinated with the Jewish authorities to work out the details of the betrayal and arrest. This was the perfect occasion to arrest Jesus—late at night and in a secluded place without crowds around to interfere.
3. .47 Judas leads this mob to the Garden of Gethsemane. John 18:2 tells us that Jesus went to that garden frequently, and Judas knew the place. Perhaps he had heard from the other disciples that they'd be going there after the supper.
4. .47 The "multitude" would have been composed of the temple police and other representatives of the Sanhedrin. There were also some Roman soldiers among the crowd.
5. These people were armed with swords and wooden clubs.

B. .48 Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss.

1. Judas had previously arranged to identify Jesus by giving him a kiss.

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<sup>1</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 782.

2. In that culture, kissing a friend on the cheek was a common form of greeting. Disciples would greet their teacher with a kiss. Judas turned a sign of friendship and love into a sign of betrayal.
3. The grammar suggests that Judas kissed Jesus emphatically or repeatedly (i.e., not just a little peck) to show the soldiers whom to arrest.
4. To betray a friend by a kiss was the height of disloyalty. To betray a friend is terrible, and to do it with a kiss is a low act of treachery.

**Quote:** A shameless, disgusting [traitor] [Judas] had become, a wretched turncoat, one who for the paltry sum of thirty pieces of silver was delivering over to the enemy the greatest Benefactor whose feet ever trod this earth....<sup>2</sup>

C. .49-50 The disciples are ready to defend Jesus with violence.

1. .49end They had a couple of swords and were ready to use them. So they ask if they should “smite with the sword.”  
  
The eleven disciples with two swords are ready to take on this mob of perhaps 100 people or more.
2. They clearly do not understand how Jesus’ arrest fits into the plan of God. Even though Jesus had repeatedly warned them that he’d be arrested and killed, they wanted to prevent that from happening.
3. .50 One of them (Peter) used a sword to cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. He probably was intending to do more damage than that. He may have been trying to cut off his head.
4. .51end Jesus heals the man. Jesus shows compassion on this man who had come out to arrest him. It’s interesting that no one seemed to pay much attention to the fact that Jesus healed the man’s ear. You would think that the crowd would have second thoughts after that, but they don’t.

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<sup>2</sup> William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 985.

5. Even in this crisis situation, Jesus still demonstrates compassion for his enemies. He didn't merely *teach* love for our enemies; he modeled it; he demonstrated love even for those who wanted to harm him.

**App:** We can't heal people, but we can show love even for those who oppose us. In our heated discussions, we may fail to show Christ-like compassion for our enemies. We don't want to help the cause of the wicked, but we do want to show personal kindness and compassion, especially to those who are suffering.

Mt 5:44 [*Jesus said*], *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

Jesus lived those words, and so should we.

D. .51-53 Jesus submits to the mob.

1. .51 He allows the arrest to happen.

“Suffer ye thus far” (ἐἴτε ἕως τούτου) – “allow/let unto/until this.” What did he mean? It's somewhat unclear.

- a) He might mean something like “allow even this.” The disciples are to allow Jesus to be arrested without resisting violently. This is all part of the plan.
- b) Or this might be something of a rebuke to the disciples, perhaps “enough of that!”
- c) Either way, the point was that the disciples should not use violence to prevent this arrest. They must allow it to happen without violence.

**App:** Unlike other religions, Christianity does *not* use force or violence in accomplishing its goals. Jesus prohibited the use of force in defense of himself, and the NT prohibits us to use force in evangelism or in the church. We don't use force to punish those we disagree with. Christianity is voluntary. We can urge and argue, but we don't use the force of arms for the propagation or defense of the church. You'll never see a Christian terrorist.

The Bible doesn't require that Christians be pacifists or non-combatants. We must defend ourselves, our families, our churches, and our nation. However, we don't use force to convert people or to punish them. Force has no role in Christianity.

2. .52 He points out the hypocrisy and cowardice of the mob. An arrest in the middle of the night in a quiet garden was an act of cowardice.

Note *who* is mentioned here—chief priests, leaders of the temple, and the elders. These are the official rulers of the nation of Israel. They are the people who made up the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews. These are supposedly religious, devout, pious people. Yet they are the ones who sent out this mob to arrest Jesus, with the ultimate goal of murdering him.

**App:** One of the great errors and sins we must avoid is hypocrisy. We should be striving to live faithfully and consistently with the biblical standards that we say we believe. The Jewish leaders did the opposite here.

3. .53end He exposes their motivation.

This was their “hour,” and the power of darkness was motivating them. The forces of darkness were behind their actions. This was a cosmic battle between light and darkness, ultimately between God and Satan, the prince of darkness.

God would allow the powers of darkness to have their way. Even this was part of God’s sovereign plan.

**Quote:** “[T]his hour [was] Satan’s only because it [was] granted to him, for in the last resort even he [was] only an instrument in God’s plan ....” The opponents of Jesus had been granted this hour in order to fulfill God’s plan as foretold in Scripture. All that Jesus foretold his disciples was beginning to take place, and this was God’s design, not that of Jesus’ opponents.<sup>3</sup>

What do we learn from these two scenes in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Jesus is Lord. He’s in full control of this situation. He knows what is happening, and he’s submitting to God’s plan. He’s a voluntary participant in these events, not a hapless victim.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 563. Quoting H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper, 1960), 182.

Also, prayer is an important and necessary part of the Christian life, especially when we are facing temptations and trials. The best thing we can do in a crisis is pray. If we fail to pray, we may not have the spiritual strength to endure through the trial. So make sure to take time for prayer. Those who have a vibrant, regular prayer life seldom yield to temptation.

We are also reminded that we are engaged in a great spiritual battle/struggle against the forces of darkness. Satan is our adversary, our foe, our enemy. The Christian life is a battle against “principalities, powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). And prayer is one of the primary weapons in that battle. Sometimes, like Jesus, we must agonize in prayer when facing distressing situations. But that’s how we are successful in our spiritual battles—through prayer.

The disciples failed to pray and consequently failed in the crisis. Jesus prayed fervently, and he endured faithfully. Let’s follow Jesus’ example in faithful, fervent prayer as we face the temptations and trials of life.

