

Matthew 26:30 – 56

^{26:30} After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹ Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of me this night, for it is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³² But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' ³³ But Peter said to him, 'Even though all may fall away because of you, I will never fall away.' ³⁴ Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny me three times.' ³⁵ Peter said to him, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny you.' All the disciples said the same thing too. ³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' ³⁷ And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. ³⁸ Then he said to them, 'My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with me.' ³⁹ And he went a little beyond them, and fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as you will.' ⁴⁰ And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'So, you men could not keep watch with me for one hour? ⁴¹ Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.' ⁴² He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.' ⁴³ Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ And he left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. ⁴⁵ Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays me is at hand!' ⁴⁷ While he was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now he who was betraying him gave them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, he is the one; seize him.' ⁴⁹ Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, 'Hail, Rabbi!' and kissed him. ⁵⁰ And Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you have come for.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. ⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. ⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?' ⁵⁵ At that time Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. ⁵⁶ But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.' Then all the disciples left him and fled.

Questions

1. Contrast the disciples with Jesus throughout this section. What's going on for the disciples?
 - a. In the beginning, why are they confident and boastful? They're greatly overestimating themselves.
 - b. Why don't they pray?
 - c. Why do they desert Jesus at the end, despite what they had promised? They hadn't prayed and drawn upon God's power to stand firm.
2. Did Jesus really need to die?
 - a. Well, he did pray that if there were any other way, that the Father would grant it to him.
 - b. So there was no other way for human beings to be saved from sin other than for Jesus to die.
3. What's going on for Jesus?
 - a. Jesus also knows that the disciples are going to betray and desert him, despite their boasts. He must feel utterly alone.
 - b. Note that Socrates drank hemlock poison and died calmly. Why is Jesus so terrified?
 - i. The penal substitution answer: Because he was going to suffer a kind of spiritual torment at the hands of the Father, which was not visible to the human eye.
 - ii. The physical redemption answer: Because he was going to put his human nature to death, and death for the eternal Son of the ever-living God was a paradox.
 - c. But what's really weighty for Jesus is that *the Father* wants him to die. What kind of Father would want his Son to die? To answer that question, we need to fully understand what Jesus is doing.
 - d. Is the Father sending Jesus to the cross against Jesus' will? No. Jesus is going willingly. In fact, he's struggling for his willingness to win out over his unwillingness. Why? Why is there this inner conflict? What is Jesus trying to do?
 - e. Notice that Jesus is struggling with something within himself. Notice the flesh vs. spirit statement in v.41. How is the flesh weak? It's not committed to the Father's love and will. The 'flesh' would pick up a sword and fight the Romans. But Jesus restrains the fallen humanity he inhabited.
 - f. Recall that in Matthew 3:13 – 4:11, the baptism and wilderness story, Jesus also struggled against something within himself. And that passage stands opposite this one (Mt.26:30 – 56) in the chiasmic structure. So what is Jesus struggling against? Something that needs to be put to death.
 - g. Illus: It's like Harry Potter having a piece of Voldermort's soul in him, and needing to destroy it by dying himself. Here's J.K. Rowling's description of Harry Potter going to die:

'His job was to walk calmly into Death's welcoming arms. Along the way, he was to dispose of Voldermort's remaining links to life, so that when at last he flung himself across Voldermort's path, and did not raise a wand to defend himself, the end would be clean, and the job that ought to have been done in Godric's Hollow would be finished: Neither would live, neither could survive. He felt his heart pounding fiercely in his chest. How strange that in his dread of death, it pumped all the harder, valiantly keeping him alive. But it would have to stop, and soon. Its beats were numbered. How many would there be time for, as he rose and walked through the castle for the last time, out into the grounds and into the forest? Terror washed over him as he lay on the floor, with that funeral drum pounding inside him. Would it hurt to die? All those times he had thought that it was about to happen and escaped, he had never really thought of the thing itself: His will to live had always been so much stronger than his fear of death. Yet it did not occur to him now to try to escape, to outrun Voldermort. It was over, he knew it, and all that was left was the thing itself: dying.

'Slowly, very slowly, he sat up, and as he did so he felt more alive and more aware of his own living body than ever before. Why had he never appreciated what a miracle he was, brain and nerve and bounding heart? It would all be gone...or at least, he would be gone from it. His breath came slow and deep, and his mouth and throat were completely dry, but so were his eyes...

'He stood up. His heart was leaping against his ribs like a frantic bird. Perhaps it knew it had little time left, perhaps it was determined to fulfill a lifetime's beats before the end. He did not look back as he closed the office door...

'He could no longer control his own trembling. It was not, after all, so easy to die. Every second he breathed, the smell of the grass, the cool air on his face, was so precious: To think that people had years and years,

time to waste, so much time it dragged, and he was clinging to each second. At the same time he thought that he would not be able to go on, and knew that he must.¹

- h. There is something in Jesus' human nature that needed to die. Like Harry Potter, who had a piece of Voldemort's soul inside him and needed to kill it, Jesus has to kill 'the flesh' which resists him, and be resurrected as a new type of human being – a God-drenched, perfected human being – who has no internal resistance at all to the love of God. He could then share his Spirit with us, to give us victory over human evil.
- 4. Why do we need Jesus?
 - a. Because no one else has conquered the corruption in human nature like Jesus did.
 - b. Because the Father had no other way of saving humanity than by having his Son take human nature, heal it, and offer it back to us
- 5. How do we compare with Jesus?
 - a. EXPLAIN: What's it like to struggle against sin like this? How many of you struggle with wanting to murder other people? I hoped not! But how many of you harbor grudges, or give up on people, or gossip about other people, or build coalitions against people you don't like, or assassinate their character? You see, sin is actually easier to resist in its later stages, because there are laws against it, you'll probably go to jail, and you may lose friends. But before the seed of sin blooms into a nasty flower and becomes an external action, it's there internally, and there, it is very hard to resist. Things stay hidden inside us, and that's where sin incubates and festers. There's a principle there. The earlier you try to deal with your own sin and self-centeredness, the harder it is. Those of you who have tried know that. But Jesus dealt with it at the root, where it was most difficult. Every time his mind wanted to think private thoughts apart from God, he said, 'No'. He constantly turned his mind and his emotions back to God and back into the love of God. He dealt with sin at its source.

¹ selected from J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p.691 – 698