

was calling on His disciples to pray with Him and according to this pattern which He had already taught them. We cannot be sure of this because the Bible does not say it, but the story of Gethsemane gives us so many hints of the Lord's prayer, it is reasonable to conclude that this great prayer was at the heart of Jesus' own prayer at this critical moment.

### **The disciples**

In the midst of the distress and confusion of the disciple's thrice repeated inability to remain awake, Jesus said to Peter; 'Simon, are you asleep?' (14:37). Jesus had not called Peter 'Simon' for a long time, using instead the name of Peter meaning 'rock' which bore so much meaning for the future of the church. It was as if Peter had fallen in his great call and regressed to his earlier faithless state. The coming days would determine what happened to him.

Then Jesus came and said, 'Enough, the time has come.' Perhaps something caught His eye, or perhaps His spiritual insight picked up the presence of the band coming to get Him, but He knew that His ministry was in the past, and the task of eternal salvation beckoned. We do not spot this in English, but the Greek word for 'the time has come' is one which is used extensively in John's Gospel to indicate the 'coming moment of God's salvation' (see John 13:1, 16:2, 17:1). True, Jesus spoke disparagingly about the rest taken by the disciples (14:41), but they were exhausted, as was Jesus. Now Jesus stood to face His captors, ready to do God's will.

### **Application**

When Jesus called on the disciples to watch, He was echoing what He had taught them to do when expecting His own return in glory (13:28-36)! They were unable to do so whilst awaiting salvation, but the story should warn them to keep watch for His return, as it should do for us! This whole passage is full of paradox, but it points to the victory of Jesus on the Cross because of Jesus' submission to the will of the Father. This must surely teach us that we can only be victorious in spiritual and earthly matters through submission to the Father, even though the world may appear to demonstrate the opposite, and submission remains a very unpopular choice of lifestyle. Is it not true, however, that when we see someone who is truly submissive in service of God and others, we are impressed by the spiritual value of what they do? Why is it then that we find it so hard to put into practice what is so plainly the heart of spiritual truth found in the Gospel? Our prayer must always be that we may be like Peter; perhaps a failure at times, but always willing to accept the Lord's help to rise above worldly things and become spiritual giants for Him.

In this study, I have avoided (for once) the large number of cross references to the Old Testament within what Jesus said (see Psalm 22:20, 39:9,10f. 69:1f. 42:5,6 and Jonah 4:9), but I have done so for a reason. These can all be looked up to help us in our study, but the analysis I have given above calls us to look again at the importance of the Lord's prayer as a means God can use to focus our lives on His salvation. If its use by Jesus enabled Him to win His victory on the Cross, then we should perhaps use it ourselves as a reminder of our salvation.

### **Questions (for use in groups)**

1. Discuss why Jesus called the disciples to stay awake whilst He prayed.
2. Given the evidence, do you believe that Jesus used the Lord's prayer within the Garden? What else does this tell us about what Jesus prayed?
3. In what ways do we, like Peter, promise to God what we are unable to give?

### **Discipleship**

*Those who are following the series of discipleship suggestions in Lent are writing a series of reflections on what Jesus felt as He came closer to Easter. Use whatever time you have at your disposal to jot down how you believe Jesus felt as these bewildering events took place in Gethsemane. Jesus was weak and yet strong; He was authoritative, and yet under authority. The majesty of these moments in Gethsemane are extraordinary; preserve them in your heart.*

### **Final Prayer**

Lord Jesus, save me. By Your awesome power to defeat the powers of evil, stand for me, stand with me, stand and fight by my side me so that I, by Your strength, may defeat the enemy and His hold on my life. Make me victorious as You are victorious, and keep me safe for ever, I pray: AMEN

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, cut through the waste and debris which surrounds me, and bring me cleansed and penitent before the Father. Deliver me from the consequences of my own unrepentant actions and save me from my wrongdoing; then take my brokenness and transform it into joy, happiness, liberation and creative zeal for You and for Your Kingdom. You alone can do this, Lord Jesus, for You are the Son of God; Alleluia, AMEN

### **Other Prayer Suggestions**

#### **Weekly Theme: Peace**

Pray today for God to work by the power of His Holy Spirit to bring the peace and wholeness of salvation to all those who are truly seeking faith. Within our world there are many who believe in God but as yet do not have peace with Him. Pray for that outpouring of God's Spirit which will transform the lives of people and pray for the church to be obedient to this work.

### **Meditation**

The Lord is not always known,  
But He is always waiting, in patience:

He is a voice we may not have heard before,  
He is the hand that frees our burden;  
He is speaking in the wind and rain,  
He is the power that creates freedom;  
He is testing us through what we do,  
He is the judge of truth and falsehood;  
He is waiting for our clear response,  
He is the guide, ever ready to direct;  
He is not as a god who is foreign to us,  
He is our God, and He longs to save us;

The Lord is not always known,  
But when He is, give thanks for revelation!

### **Bible Study - Mark 14:26-42**

<sup>26</sup> When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. <sup>27</sup> Jesus said to them, 'You will all be shaken to the core; for it is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." <sup>28</sup> But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' <sup>29</sup> Peter said to him, 'Even if everyone else is shaken to the core, I will not.' <sup>30</sup> Jesus said to him, 'Amen, I say to you that this very night, before the cock crows twice, even you will deny me three times.' <sup>31</sup> But he said emphatically, 'Even if I had to die with you, I would not deny you.' And they all said the same.

<sup>32</sup> They came to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' <sup>33</sup> He took Peter and James and John with Him, and was completely horrified and absolutely devastated. <sup>34</sup> He said to them, 'My soul is distraught, even to death. Stay here and keep awake.' <sup>35</sup> Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> 'Abba, Father,' He said, 'All things are possible for You; take this cup from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' <sup>37</sup> He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?' <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation; the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.' <sup>39</sup> Then He went away again and prayed, saying the same thing. <sup>40</sup> Once more he came and found them sleeping, for they could not keep their eyes open and they did not know what to say to him. <sup>41</sup> Returning a third time to them, He said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The time has come; the Son of Man is being handed over to sinners. <sup>42</sup> Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is near.'

### **Review**

The first and the last verse of our text are both simple descriptions of facts; at the beginning (14:26), Jesus the disciples sang a hymn together to conclude the Passover meal (14:17-25) and at the end (14:42), Jesus stood ready to face betrayal. Apart from the death and resurrection of our Lord itself, hardly any story line in Scripture is as dramatic as this incident in the Gethsemane, and it happened in those few hours between the Last Supper and the Betrayal of Christ.

The drama, as we will see, is full of extraordinary conversations. These were between Jesus and the disciples, between Jesus and Peter, and between Jesus and His Father, and each set of conversations was full of potential misunderstanding and failure. The disciples were told they would be 'scattered' (14:27), but following the example of Peter (14:29), they all swore allegiance to Him unto death (14:31). Then, the three favoured disciples, led by Peter, were told to watch and protect Jesus while He prayed, but they failed to do so three times because of sleep (14:37,40,41). Lastly, at the heart of incident, Jesus talked personally to His Father about what lay ahead, and although the potential was there for misunderstanding even between these two (14:36), Jesus rose above it and accepted His Father's will (14:36). In awful majesty and loneliness, He stood alone at the end awaiting His arrest (14:42), pointing out to those who should have kept watch the arrival of the mob to arrest Him!

All of this is essential to our understanding of Jesus' death and resurrection; the failure of the disciples and Peter's failure in particular, and Jesus' divine ability to handle circumstances too powerful for mere mortals. The early Christians for whom Mark wrote were themselves subject to persecution and some of them faced death. An early example of this may be found in the story of the martyrdom of Polycarp, who was burned to death by a crowd on 22<sup>nd</sup> February AD156. As such Christians were taken to their deaths, the example of their Lord in Gethsemane would have been an inspiration during those awful moments in which they knew they were about to die.

From those days until this, the way in which Jesus dealt with the hammer-blow of death has inspired all who have read about it; it is a supreme example of personal sacrifice, in which Jesus put His own human feelings aside and dedicated Himself the Father's will. The words 'not what I will, but what You will' are not quite the same as the famous equivalent in Luke's Gospel; 'yet not my will but yours be done' (Luke 22:42), but we can recognise the same sentiment of self sacrifice, by which Jesus submitted Himself completely to the will of the Father. In this way, Jesus proved to the whole world that in the face of insurmountable odds, death could be defeated by the power and love of God. In those final moments of His betrayal, Jesus faced the both the awful demons of death and also the supreme love of the Father. He defeated the first and gloriously embraced the second; and He did this for us.

The poor disciples tried very hard to be obedient and do what Jesus asked of them, but they failed. Their inability to stand with Christ at the end appears tragic, but at the same time, it was true to the real nature of humanity, even the very best of humanity. So here in this story, the disciples, the great heroes of the early church who had received the Spirit at Pentecost and begun the work of the proclamation of the Gospel, were shown to be deeply flawed. They were impotent alongside their Lord at His moment of great need. What clearer message could there be about the nature of human weakness and mortality. Some think it strange that the early church could have allowed their heroes to be portrayed in such a way. However, it is by the telling of truth alone that the Gospel of God is effective in the life of people, and has been, for more than two thousand years.

### Going Deeper

The disciples were not able to cope with staying awake, but Jesus prayed intensely. We only have snippets of His prayers, and wonderfully, they appear to indicate that whatever else Jesus may have prayed (see, for example, John 17), He used the prayer that He taught His disciples, found in Matthew and Luke, which is called 'The Lord's Prayer'. Later on in our deeper studies we will look at this and how it helps us understand Jesus' state of mind and will.

#### **Peter and the disciples**

It was Zechariah who prophesied; 'strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be slaughtered' (Zech 13:7b). Somehow, between this Old Testament passage and its use here in Mark's Gospel, the word 'slaughtered' had been changed to 'scattered'; and we should note that it was God who spoke these words as an act of judgement against Israel for its sins. However, although there are many such statements within Old Testament prophecies, this one in Zechariah was different; it went on; 'I will ... refine them as one refines silver, and test them as

gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say 'they are my people'; and they will say, 'the Lord is our God!' (Zech 13:9). So Zechariah's prophecy was not a prophecy of disaster, but about the firm judgements of God which would both test His people to the limit but ultimately go beyond that testing to bring about restoration. This is clearly why Jesus used the prophecy, because His next comment said that after the disciples had been scattered by the tragic events of His death, Jesus would 'go before them' (14:28) in resurrection power to Galilee; and as we know, this was what Jesus did (Mark 16:7; Matt 28:7) in order to restore the disciples and commission them for the founding of the church.

The disciples could not possibly have understood all this at the time Jesus said it, and it is most likely that this part of the story is told to verify to the early church what Jesus did after His resurrection to remould the broken scattered disciples and build the church of God's Kingdom. Peter certainly did not understand this, and continued to maintain that he would not allow Jesus to stand alone against the enemy, however this was manifest. But Jesus knew that Peter was speaking beyond his ability to succeed, and He solemnly prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times 'before the cock crows twice' (14:30). It is a story to which we will return in the next few studies, because the story of Peter's failure is told in awful parallel with the trial of Jesus before the Jews, as a parable of human ignorance and divine justice.

Incidentally, cockerels had been banned from Jerusalem at the time of Christ. Our best guess as to what Jesus was talking about was that He meant the second watch of the night sounded by (Roman) trumpets, called the 'gallicinium'. This is not certain, but probable!

#### **The prayer at Gethsemane**

The terrible events in the Garden of Gethsemane are well known. Gethsemane means 'oil press', and there was probably one nearby associated with the Mount of Olives and performing this function. Jesus had all the disciples with Him, and left all of them except Peter, James and John with no other instruction than to 'sit here' whilst He prayed (14:32). Throughout the Gospel, they were silent observers of Jesus' work and ministry, and yet more than that, they were essential witnesses to the truth of Jesus' life, ministry and death.

Jesus took the three disciples who were close to Him and was immediately hit by the emotional and spiritual enormity of what was happening. In most translations, verse 33 reads; 'He began to be distressed and agitated'; but the Greek demands we say more than that, giving us a feel which Denis Nineham in his (Pelican) commentary calls 'suggestive of shuddering awe'. The translation I have given tries to convey this kind of horror at what Jesus faced, which was the full force of satanic evil combined with potential separation from God through death. It was only by means of faith expressed in prayer that Jesus could withstand this tortuous attack, and although we all know the famous prayer of submission which Jesus prayed, a more extensive analysis of what Jesus prayed reveals a surprise.

Jesus began with the word 'Abba'. This word for 'father' is only found in the New Testament three times; here, and in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6. 'Abba' is an Aramaic word which it is believed Jesus used to address His Father with affection, as here. However, it was also transliterated into Greek and used as the first word of the Lord's Prayer ('Our Father, who is in heaven ... Matt 6:9, Luke 11:2). This prayer begins with an affirmation of the omnipotence of Almighty God and His will, and asks for the establishment of His Kingdom on earth 'as it is in heaven'. In Gethsemane, Jesus also spoke of the supreme authority of God, saying in more simple terms; 'all things are possible for You ...' and going on to talk of God's will being done.

However, as we know, Jesus' request for God's will to be done was prayed with a high degree of personal cost. The Lord's prayer allows the one speaking to ask for God to supply their immediate daily needs, 'give us this day our daily bread'; but Jesus' human need was to escape from the terrible tragedy and injustice into which He was falling. However, in the battle between human need (even Jesus' human need) and the will of God, there could only be one victor; as Jesus recognised when He famously said, 'not what I will, but what You will.' (14:36).

Then, if you thought that the connection with the Lord's prayer was tenuous, in Jesus' last conversation with His disciples spoken in the midst of His own prayers as He waited for His arrest, Jesus urged His disciples to 'pray that you may not fall into temptation' (14:38). This is very close to the words of the Lord's prayer, and it was a phrase which reflected the victory Jesus had won in Gethsemane by refusing to submit to His own human will and submitting to the Father. It is possible that Jesus had used the Lord's prayer Himself in Gethsemane, and He