

Jason Upchurch - Mark 14:26-42 - The Good News Needs No Help

This morning we come to the beginning of the darkest hours in the life of the Lord Jesus. From our section this morning until almost the end of chapter 15 what we have is the suffering of Jesus. When we think of the suffering of Jesus, usually we think of the specific time that Jesus is hanging on the cross as he is suffering in torment for our sins. But the Bible makes it clear that while that is the height of his suffering, Jesus's suffering is much more than that.

Generically speaking, there's a sense in which the entire incarnation of Jesus is suffering. **Phil. 2** says that Jesus, God in the flesh, laid aside the glories and comforts and majesty of heaven to take on a human nature. He was born a slave, born in utter poverty. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize just coming in the flesh was an act of humility from sitting on the throne as the Creator of the universe.

Isa. 53 calls him the man of sorrows - his life is defined by sorrow.

So there is a generic sense that being born into a sinful world was suffering. And of course we see that Jesus is often frustrated with the unbelief and foolishness of sinful people, especially his own disciples, his own family, and the unbelieving Jews in general.

But it really is here in the Garden of Gethsemane that we see the beginning of his suffering proper. This is just half a day before he is nailed to the cross and the impending reality of his death sets in. He knows the physical agony he is about to endure. Crucifixion was absolutely brutal.

But more than that he is about to endure the full force of the wrath of the Father for all the sins of all his people. The triune God is perfectly holy, perfectly righteous and perfectly just. All who sin deserve the full force of eternal damning wrath for every sin they ever commit because the God we sin against is infinitely holy and infinitely just. All sin must be punished or God would not be holy and just.

And what Jesus knows is that he's about to do is stand in the place of his people. He is going to endure the full blast of the Father's good and just wrath that all his people deserve for all eternity. And he's going to do that in the space of a few short hours on the cross.

Jesus will bear incomprehensible suffering. Suffering we can't even begin to fathom because it is suffering not only in the place of billions of people, but it is compressed into mere hours of time rather than the span of all eternity.

If you imagine the energy of a 100W light bulb compared to that of a lightning bolt. It takes a 100W light bulb 4 months of continuous operation to consume 1 Billion joules of energy. That same power is unleashed in a split second when a lightning bolt strikes the earth. Same power, same energy, just compressed in time with absolutely devastating force.

What Jesus is going to endure in 3 hours on the cross is the lightning bolt of God's full wrath for all the sins of all his people that wouldn't be exhausted for all eternity. So when we read **Vs. 33-34 Read** this is something of an understatement.

Everything from here is suffering for Jesus until he says his final words: "it is finished." That's why Luke records that in the Garden Jesus is sweating drops of blood. This is suffering that has never been endured, and never will be by anyone else.

And what Mark helps us understand here is that Jesus endures this massive suffering all on his own without any help from anyone. In the first part of chapter 14 we saw that Judas would betray Jesus. The plan is made and put in place and begins to unfold.

But Judas isn't the only betrayer. What we find out here is that everyone is going to betray Jesus. They will all fall away. Peter, James, John, Andrew, Thomas, Thaddeus...everyone. They will all betray Jesus. In his final hours on earth Jesus is abandoned by absolutely everyone.

And here's the amazing thing: Jesus still faithfully accomplishes our salvation through suffering. It's amazing.

Big Picture: Jesus accomplished every bit of our salvation all by himself.

Jesus had absolutely no encouragement along the road to the cross. He had no help. He took no shortcuts. And yet he never faltered, he never sinned. He completely obeyed the Father and in doing so achieved our salvation.

And so what I want to do this morning is walk through this passage and look at what Jesus says to his disciples. Because I think it's instructive to us. Jesus didn't need his disciples to accomplish salvation then. And he doesn't need us to secure our salvation now. The work of salvation is completely accomplished by Jesus.

And here's why this is important: because there is a part in every single one of us that still thinks somehow our salvation is dependent on us. I think most people functionally operate under the: "I'll do my best, Jesus does the rest mentality." And so how we view our standing with God ends up depending on how well we performed.

Did we gossip? Did we get angry? Did we look at websites we shouldn't have? Did we waste money?

If we did, we feel like maybe we're second class in the Kingdom. God's going to write us out of the will or we're going to be relegated to the janitorial crew in heaven.

Or, we think we had a great week and somehow our inheritance is now a double portion and we're going to sit on the right or left in the Kingdom as we rule over all these peasants who had to rely solely on the grace of Jesus to get in.

And at the end of the day both of those mindsets - whether we did good or bad - is a works based salvation. The reality is that all of us get in the Kingdom solely on the grace of Jesus. Just like the disciples needed the grace of Jesus, we need the grace of Jesus. We needed it when we were first saved, and we need it all the way to glory.

Ad here's what you need to hear this morning: you're going to fail. And your failing won't cancel your salvation.

And we see these principles with the disciples in our passage this morning. Just when we think Jesus needs the most help, the most encouragement, the most commitment from his disciples, we're reminded that he needs nothing from us and we need everything from him.

So let's look at some lessons we learn from the disciples.

1. Certainty of failure. Read 26-27

So remember this is late at night, probably very late Thursday night or in the wee hours of Friday morning. Jesus has already told the disciples that there is a betrayer among them and they were all astonished. They were so surprised they all assumed it might be them, no one accused Judas.

But they still don't know just how fast this is all going to happen. Jesus has told them several times in the week before that he will be handed over and killed and raised and they don't understand. They are now walking to the Garden where Jesus will be arrested and they still don't know what's about to happen.

And what they learn on this short walk to the Garden - and we learn - is that Judas isn't the only betrayer. Jesus says they will all fall away. Skandalizo. They will all abandon Jesus.

Now, this is important. The way the disciples will abandon Jesus is different than what Judas did. They won't apostatize like Judas. They're not forsaking the faith altogether. They're not hellbound like Judas is hell bound.

But they will all deny Jesus, either verbally like Peter. Or by their running away. They will turn their back on the Lord just as he enters the final hours of his life facing the wrath of God.

And it's not a question of if they will fail. It's a question of when they will fail. And Jesus knows they will fail because it's been written that they will fail. **Read 27**

Jesus quotes a passage from the book of Zechariah. The disciples don't know this, but the prophets wrote that they would abandon the Good Shepherd. In the time of trial, in the day when it mattered most - when Jesus was struck - they would scatter. God knew that. It was foretold. Jesus knew that going into Passion week and he still determined to save his people.

By the way, who does Jesus say strikes the shepherd? "I" - who's that? God; God the Father. When you look at the Zechariah passage it's God talking. He is going to put his own Son to death.

There's a lot of people who want to somehow hide the idea that Jesus is suffering the wrath of the Father. They're embarrassed by this reality or think it somehow destroys the Trinity. But it doesn't. The Bible is clear that the one God in 3 persons brings about atonement. The Son bears the wrath of the Father for the sins of his people.

Jesus does this knowing full well his disciples will abandon him in this hour.

And can I tell you something? It's bad news, but it's important news: you're going to fail too. And I'm going to fail God. The issue is not if, the issue is what? When.

Turn to 1 John 1 for a minute. We need to understand the reality of our own failings and sinfulness. As much as we're called to put off sin and put sin to death you will fail in your pursuit of righteousness. And God knows that. **Read 1:8-10**

Can I just tell you something? I know you're a sinner. Because Jesus says in his word you're a sinner.

Can I tell you something? I'm a sinner. Because Jesus says in his word I'm a sinner. If you or I deny that reality we're lying to ourselves and we're calling Jesus a liar.

It's not like Jesus saved us that one time and now it's all up to us. No. From start to finish it's all him. That's why we cling to that promise **Vs. 9:** if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive our sins.

And this is a hard message for us to actually believe and accept. That's why back in **Mark 14** Peter takes issue with Jesus.

But our moral failure is a certainty. You know what else is a certainty? Restoration. That's the second point.

2) The certainty of restoration. **Read 28**

Jesus tells his disciples "you're all going to fail" but he immediately tells them "But after I'm raised I'll go ahead to Galilee."

What is he saying? He knows they're going to fail and abandon him in his darkest hour. And he knows he's still going to the cross for these traitors. And he knows he'll be raised up for these traitors. And after he's raised, he's going to go get them and restore them. Just like a good shepherd goes and gets the wandering, lost sheep.

He's talking about after the resurrection when the disciples go back to their old life of fishing and Jesus comes and fetches them. But what we learn here is that it's already part of his plan to go get them.

Look at John 21. This is after the resurrection, the disciples head back to their homes in Galilee. **Read 1-14**

You guys know the rest of the story. This is where Simon Peter is restored. He denied Jesus 3 times and 3 times Jesus asks "Simon, do you love me?" In the exact same manner Simon denied, Jesus restores.

This is planned restoration. Mark adds the detail that Jesus went ahead of them to Galilee. So imagine that. Jesus is hanging out on the shore of Galilee just waiting for these guys to come along and go back to their old life.

You ever watch little kids about to do something kinda dumb. Not like break a bone dumb, but foolish and it's gonna hurt a little? And you don't stop them because sometimes they need to learn the hard way so it sticks? I think there's a sense in which that's what's going on here.

See, here's the thing: you are certain to fail in your walk with Jesus. God could providentially keep you from that, but he doesn't. He builds in consequences to the universe on purpose. Even using our own sin to bring about his good purposes.

But if you are truly in the Kingdom, you are certain to be restored. God will raise you up just like he raised up the guys whose names are written on the pillars of the New Jerusalem. There might be some discipline in our lives as a result of the sin, but God will raise you up.

He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion!

So when you sin you can go around and pout about it for days or weeks. Or can you go repent, confess your sins to the Lord, and be restored to right fellowship. And get on with the Kingdom.

But Jesus is ever the shepherd leaving the 99 and going after the 1. And we don't like being the 1 that Jesus goes and gets. And maybe he's had to come fetch you more than a few times. But that's what the Good Shepherd does.

Jesus didn't bring you into the Kingdom so you could sit around feeling bad about your sin. He took away your sin, forgave your sin, continues to forgive your sin, so you can go sing the praises of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

In Christ our restoration is certain. You might as well enjoy it now.

Back in **Mark 14**, let's look at the 3rd thing.

We've seen the certainty of failure, the certainty of restoration.

3) Notice the Pride of Failure. **Read 27-30**

People often joke that Peter is the apostle with the foot shaped mouth. He often says things that he later regrets. And I think this is one of those times.

He makes 2 claims here that are both rooted in pride. The first is that even though everyone else falls away he would never, ever do that. He's better, he's more faithful, he's more committed. He's the best disciple!

Prov 16:18: Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Jesus says that within hours he will not only deny him, but deny him 3 times. Three times before the rooster crows twice. From basically swearing an oath to his utter downfall is less than a few hours.

The second claim he makes is that if he's got to die for Jesus, he's going to die! And this time it's not just Peter. It's all of them. **Read 31**

They all claim over and over that they will die for Jesus. The word used here - emphatically - is the idea of excessive emphasis.

You ever had someone tell you a story and the details started to seem a little too fantastic? Just kind of over the top? And you're like "really, that happened?" And they keep doubling and tripling down and the more they do that the less you believe them?

That's these guys. Their words are excessive. And borne out of pride. They won't hold to their word. Judas is going to come in less than a couple hours and they will all run away.

See, they can't fathom a situation in which Jesus has to die for them. They can't see that it's they who need saving, not Jesus. They can't see that they need protection, not Jesus.

And they all jump in saying the same thing. And it's just pride. Many times we make vows and resolutions and promises that we shouldn't make because we're weak.

And when we're fighting sin - and it's life long battle - we have to know we'll fail.

There's a lot of times when I'm talking to people who are trying to overcome some sin. Maybe it's swearing or complaining or impulse buying or worry or whatever. And they come to me and want help to overcome it. And one of the questions I often ask is "What are you going to do the next time you fail." Fail? "I'm not going to fail, I'm going to put this thing to death now."

Pride can't imagine it will fail and even promises that it won't. Humility says that we can fail and probably will fail and when we do we come back and refresh ourselves in the grace of God and keep fighting.

Here's the best news about all of this: Jesus knows full well what his disciples are about to do. He knows they'll leave him and forsake him. But he doesn't go into the Garden and pray "Father, deliver me from these foolish disciples - just take me back up into heaven now." Doesn't pray that.

What does he do? He continues on the path to save his fickle friends. And just like he saved them and kept them, he saves us and keeps us.

Jesus had no help on the way to suffering. No friends, no encouragement, only traitors who he saved anyway.

And if he saves them, and restores them, and uses them - we can rest knowing that if he has saved us, he will restore us and continue to use us for his glory.

Pray