

Agonizing Prayer

Series: Understanding Prayer

Mark 14:22-42 (1008)

Steve Wood

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MICHEL QUOIST *Lord, it is dark! Lord, are you there in my darkness? Where are you, Lord? Do you love me still? I haven't wearied you? Lord, answer me! Answer! It is so dark!*

I. From blessing and hopeful anticipation

a. The joy of the Passover celebration

(v. 22-26a) ²²While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, *"Take it; this is my body."* ²³Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴*"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,"* he said to them. ²⁵*"I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."* ²⁶When they had sung a hymn...

b. The hope of the coming kingdom

II. To challenges threatening utter failure

a. How quickly our world can change

(v. 26) ²⁶When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

(v. 27-28) ²⁷*"You will all fall away,"* Jesus told them, *"for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'* ²⁸*But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."*

b. Life-changing challenges can bring unanticipated responses

(v. 29-31) ²⁹Peter declared, *"Even if all fall away, I will not."* ³⁰*"I tell you the truth,"* Jesus answered, *"today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."* ³¹But Peter insisted emphatically, *"Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."* And all the others said the same.

III. To overwhelming reality

a. When trouble becomes more than just a theory

(v. 32-33) ³²They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “*Sit here while I pray.*” ³³He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴“*My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,*” he said to them. “*Stay here and keep watch.*”

b. The intimate cry of the desperate heart

(v. 35) ³⁵Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.

(v. 36a) ³⁶“*Abba, Father,*” he said...

“Abba” is the Aramaic word for “Papa,” a term of great intimacy and affectionate respect. It was normally the first word a child would utter, but adults could use it for their fathers as well, and students sometimes used it of their teachers. Perhaps because it implied such intimacy, Jewish people never used it of God (though they did call him a heavenly father).

(v. 36b) ... “*everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me.*”

(v. 36c) *Yet not what I will, but what you will.*”

c. Pressing through even if you have to go it alone

(v. 37-40) ³⁷Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “*Simon,*” he said to Peter, “*are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour?*” ³⁸*Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.*” ³⁹Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

TM *Part of you is eager, ready for anything in God; but another part is as lazy as an old dog sleeping by the fire.*

A. W. TOZER For each of us the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will all be swept away, and we shall have only God. To the man of pseudo faith that is a terrifying thought, but to real faith it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain.

d. Knowing when it's time to let go

(v. 41-42) ⁴¹Returning the third time, he said to them, “*Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.*” ⁴²*Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!*”

PHILIP YANCEY The Bible’s accounts show that miracles—dramatic, show-stopping miracles like many of us still long for—simply do not foster deep faith. The kind of faith God values seems to develop best when everything fuzzes over, when God stays silent, when the fog rolls in. Faith makes things possible—it does not make them easy.

Matthew 11:12 ¹²*From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.*