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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!"

Confession time. I am a christian legend in my own mind. My sermons are better than John MacArthur and John Piper combined. I am a prayer warrior wearing through the varnish on the floor because of all the hours spent on my knees, praying. The world is being turned upside down onto it's very head because of the power and reach of my ministry. My

conference speaking calendar is filled 2 years out in advance. And missions around the world are affected by the vision and teaching depth of my ministry.

NOT. None of that is true, but, at least I'm in good company. Sort of. Because Peter and the disciples, in this passage, are legends in their own minds too.

We all have visions of grandeur about what we'll accomplish for God. But, we are all weak in our flesh. We can't do the things we dream of doing.

What is the most disturbing to me though, is that Peter and James and John and the other 8 disciples, after the Holy Spirit came at pentecost, did in fact turn the world upside down.

We tend to identify with the failures described in this chapter as normative. For us. But the fact is, we don't look anything like the first century church after pentecost.

We have the same source as they did, but they turned the world upside down. We sort of fizzle. The world is in the driver's seat. Unconcerned. Un-influenced by christians. Today. In America. We've become invisible, mostly.

We identify with the failure prone disciples but our identity seems to stop there. The turn the world upside down disciples were another breed. Unattainable to us. Super saints.

The reason there are four gospels is to dispel just such a theory. These men were painfully ordinary. The verses we just read prove that fact.

What changed? How did they press on to turn the world upside down?

We've been looking at the discussion and discourse surrounding these final hours of Jesus life in Matthew. But to answer our question we need to look at John's record of this time frame.

The upper room discourse holds the key to our question. Why did these men have such spiritual power, in spite of their weaknesses, just the same as ours.

John 15: 4 Jesus said to them, and us, *“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

Did you catch that last bit. *for apart from me you can do nothing.*

The painful fact is that in our flesh, we have zero capacity to do anything at all that would glorify God. We need a connection to the power source in order to bear lasting fruit.

Grapes do not grow on branches that are cut off from the root and the stem. Fruit grows on branches that are connected to a source of life. A stem and root system of a good plant in good soil.

How interesting that this discussion with Peter and the rest of the disciples is within hours of the other discussion about fruit and life source.

They didn't understand. Yet. But they would. Notice something with me from that very same discussion in John 15. It's such a colorful metaphor.

1“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

Pruning is painful. Pruning involves cutting off leaves and twigs that are using up life source energy and creating no fruit. Pruning removes the dross so that the energy source only has one place left to go. Fruitfulness.

These men are about to get a pruning. A system shock that they will

think is life threatening. No fruit possible. The plant is going to die, the pruning is so vast. But they *will* live, and not only live, they will bring forth fruit that will shatter the whole world.

Pinch yourself. Here we are. 21 centuries later. A direct result of these men who are about to discover they have zero power in themselves to do anything for the master. Pride and ignorance are about to be cut away. So much so that Peter at least, and likely the other 10 also, figure the plant is dead.

Paul defines what we are trying to describe, perfectly. Romans 7:18
For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

Nothing good dwells in me. In my flesh I was born with. Hopeless. Anything of lasting good for the glory of my Master must come from somewhere else.

His indwelling Holy Spirit is the one and only source of every lasting good thing that gives glory to God. My flesh produces nothing of value.

With that in mind, look again at this discussion in Matthew 26.

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 SHALL BE SCATTERED.’ 32 “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

Here is the pruning. Life threatening pruning. Or at least it seemed so to them. But there is hope in these words. The root and the stalk of the vine though crucified, will be resurrected, and life to the branches will again flow.

But their pride in thinking they have the power within themselves to act independently of Him will be removed, at least from these, forever.

*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 SHALL BE SCATTERED.'

The prophecy is from an obscure and difficult passage of Zechariah's prophecy. Zechariah 13:7 says; *“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,*

And against the man, My Associate,”

Declares the LORD of hosts.

“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;

And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

So obscure is this prophecy that if Jesus had not told us it is about this exact time, we may not have ever known.

Jesus, in teaching His disciples, tells them, these words predict immediate events. I am going to be arrested, and you are going to be *offended*, the King James says.

The greek word is used to describe the stick with the string that holds the box up that will trap the animal when it is jerked out of the way. A trap. An offense. You will be caused to stumble. My arrest is going to cause you to scatter.

Jesus will be taken and the disciples will run away. A shattering thought. But the next verse gives a sense of hope, even in unimaginable tragedy.

32 “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

There is hope there. There's still going to be a Me. After I have been raised . . . from the dead . . . I will go ahead of . . . who? You. This is unimaginable to you. But there will still be me, and there will still even be . . . you. Corporate and individually. You. All of you will survive this pruning.

2 chapters later in John's gospel we read these words in the High Priestly prayer of Jesus. 12*“While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be*

fulfilled.

One of the doctrines of grace is called the Perseverance of the saints. Real Christians, the true children of God, born again by the indwelling Holy Spirit, are kept. Kept by God. Guarded by God so that we will not perish.

Scripture says the Shepherd will be crushed and the sheep will be scattered, but, not permanently. Nothing can rip us out of God's hand. Nothing. Those who belong to God, persevere. Through any trial. Any pruning. But it won't be fun.

I'm sure these men thought their hearts would explode from the trauma and the stress, but they will survive. God will cause it. And fruit will grow after the pruning.

Meanwhile, back to invincible Peter.

33 But Peter said to Him, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away."

The first and most amazing thing here, which we can see perfectly with 20-20 hindsight that Peter and the others were blind-sided to is that; When Jesus says something, it's the Word of God. His predictions have all happened before and they will all happen in the future.

He's just interpreted a prediction by Zechariah concerning Him and them, and He's said This is going to happen, not only because of my word, but also because it is written in prophecy and must be fulfilled. Double whammy.

And Peter's immediate response is, no, God's book is obviously wrong. That will never happen.

It rings of a similar statement in Matthew 16 where Peter says, absolutely not, will you be crucified. And Jesus says, get behind me Satan.

Peter again challenges the very word of God. And he doesn't stop there. His pride kicks in, big time. His flesh. *“Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.”*

These losers, maybe. But not ME. Peter beating his chest like Tarzan the ape man. The sin of pride.

He hasn't learned the lesson about the vine. The power source. He thinks his flesh will be quite sufficient to overrule the words of Jesus and Zechariah. Ouch. We're no different. We're right there in that first paragraph I read to you this morning. We think we're rock stars. In our flesh.

34 Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

Again! The predictive word of God. The odds are against you Peter. When God speaks, it happens. But Peter (and sadly, we all likewise) is not ready to say Uncle. He's going to argue with the person who spoke the worlds into existence.

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.

Irrascible Peter. And we'll see he actually puts his money where his mouth is, unlike most of us. When the soldiers come he pulls out his sword and he would have died right there. For Jesus. His boast wasn't completely empty.

I talk real big and back it up with nothin'! At least Peter pulled out his sword and started whacking. But it was Simon. Not Peter. It was Peter the old man. Peter in the flesh. And it's no good. Not to him, and not to Jesus.

Take it to it's logical conclusion. Peter, in his flesh, with no help from God, pulls out his sword and starts hacking and doesn't stop until; there is no arrest. No crucifixion. No forgiveness of sin. We go out whacking in our flesh and it's win - win. For Satan.

All the disciples said the same thing too. And all of the rest of the Master's men are like, just because Mr. big mouth always gets his gob speaking first, don't think we're not right there with him. Peter just spoke for the group. Peter's like, these losers may fall away but not ME, and they're like, Oh NO we won't. We're just as good as Peter, just not as vocal.

So far I've been talking about us. Our relationship with the master. How we identify with these men. Their weakness. Their fleshy boasts. How we desperately need the pruning and the oneness with the life source so we can be fruitful.

We'll shift gears now and look at the Man of Sorrows. But notice first, He doesn't replay the "Get behind me Satan" card as before. Jesus is going to let these events take place, and God is going to oversee the pain and the pruning process. But now, it's about Jesus.

And don't let the contrast of the weakness of men versus the strength of the God-man be lost on you. Matthew is a wise painter. His strokes on his canvas are controlled by God the Holy Spirit as he writes this account and paints for us this picture. Weakness and strength. Dependence and source.

The disciples will lose this round of the battle because sin and flesh is their only source. They are disconnected from the life giver. Jesus will win this battle because pouring out His heart in prayer to His Father will keep Him connected to the source of all life and holiness and strength. That's our contrast. That's our take away.

36Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."

The term "Man of Sorrows" is taken from Isaiah 53. 3 *He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And*

like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Listen to the words of Philip Bliss <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzOkVtXPdGk>>

*“Man of Sorrows,” what a name For the Son of God who came
Ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned He
stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood; Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*Guilty, vile, and helpless, we, Spotless Lamb of God was He;
Full redemption—can it be? Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*Lifted up was He to die, “It is finished!” was His cry;
Now in heaven exalted high; Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

*When He comes, our glorious King, All His ransomed home to
bring, Then anew this song we’ll sing Hallelujah! what a Savior!*

These verses take us to a solemn, quiet place where Jesus pours out His heart before His father in anticipation of being crushed; for our sins.

Gethsemane, the very name, means olive press. The name depicts for us, the crushing of something, in order to bring forth value. Richness and beauty comes from crushing the olive and the pits. A rather violent crushing. Jesus is about to be crushed, for you and me. And He is distressed.

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Peter and James and John. The inner three, He takes with Him and He

says, will you keep watch with me.

They're useless to Him, but He loves them so, and He wants them to be with Him.

It's a poor comparison but it came to my mind. I went with Pam all 3 times to the delivery room. I was useless to her, but I wanted to be there, and she wanted me there.

Maybe not completely useless. When Tina was born they flopped her on a table and were attending to Pam and after a little bit I said, "hey, this kid is turning blue." So maybe not entirely useless, but I can identify ever so slightly with these men that Jesus wanted with Him. Powerless to do anything except just be there.

Even at that, their flesh will overpower them with sleep and they can't even provide that little bit or support.

39And 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."

I was thinking about this verse this week as I was driving all over the range out at work. Abraham came to mind. *My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;*

For Abraham, as he raised the knife to kill his only son Isaac, it *was* possible. God found another way. Isaac was spared. A lamb was bleating, caught in the brush. God provided a lamb.

This time, though, Jesus is that Lamb, and there is no other possibility. *"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."*

What was the cup. We cannot fathom, really, what this weight on Jesus, the God-man, and I emphasize, Man, we can't get our heads around this. The sin of the ages. Countless multitudes. All of that wrath poured out on Jesus on the cross.

If you want to begin to understand that, go to Revelation 16 and read in that chapter of the seven final bowls of wrath that God pours out onto mankind at the end of the tribulation period. That would at least be a starting place.

Jesus is under a crushing load that we cannot understand. It's beyond our comprehension. And don't think to yourself, well, He's God, so He can take it. Rather think of the other truth that He is fully man, and He feels this overwhelming weight of judgement, as a man.

“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.”

This is our flesh. You've got one job to do. You're useless to Him, but at least be there. Keep watch with Him while He pours His soul out before His Father in heaven. And you can't even do that. Welcome to your flesh. Don't ask me how I know this.

the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

This is where I began this morning. In our **spirits** we go out and conquer strongholds for the glory of God. In our **flesh**, not so much.

How many times, to my shame, have I been part of a conversation that in some form or another rubs up against God's truth and my mouth which is too often open when it needs to be shut, is at that moment frozen over like the arctic river. Nothing comes out. And I think to myself, there it was, wait, wait, wait, there it went. And the moment is gone.

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.”

John 4:34 *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent*

Me and to accomplish His work.

Jesus came to do His Father's will. That ultimate hour and His ultimate will are coming. Jesus says, if there's no other way, Thy 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.*

Luke, in his gospel, gives us a little better picture of the depth of the distress that Jesus bore.

The disciples are useless to Him. And His human ness is breaking down. He is close to death while they sleep. Luke tells us; ...22:43 *Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him. 44 And in His anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.*

Science tells us that it is in fact possible to die from a broken heart. Blood vessels can rupture. Blood mixed with sweat because things are rupturing from the extreme stress He bore. Disciples are no good to Him, useless, and God sends an angel.

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!"

Behold, the hour is at hand

The church, like the disciples, is asleep. Will we hear words similar to what the disciples are hearing. An hour is at hand and you aren't ready because you've been asleep.

You're still woozy from sleep, trying to get your bearings. Where am I and what's happening, and suddenly, Judas appears with enemies who have weapons and torches and are very much awake. It happens just that fast.

Our final word comes to us from Paul to the Thessalonians; 5:5 *For you are all sons of the light and sons of the day; we do not belong to the night or to the darkness.* 6 *So then, let us not sleep as the others do, but let us remain awake and sober.*

and the Ephesians; 5:14 *So it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."* 15 *Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk, not as unwise but as wise,...*

"O church, arise, and put your armor on;
Hear the call of Christ our captain.
For now the weak can say that they are strong
In the strength that God has given.
With shield of faith and belt of truth,
We'll stand against the devil's lies.
An army bold, whose battle cry is love,
Reaching out to those in darkness. Keith Getty, Stuart Townend 2005
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eq8S9NX5HIA>>

I want to encourage you this morning, in view of our recent reminder of just how fragile our lives are, to take an accounting.

Have you known some wins among the failures. Do you know the Saviour and can recall some times when He was definitely bearing some fruit in your lives. Or is there just and only the sense of failure.

It's OK to fail. These men did. And lived to win another day. But if there is only failure and no sense at all of Jesus ever coming along side and bearing fruit through you, give yourself to Him anew. Don't stay asleep and then one day it's too late.

The disciples will lose this round of the battle this day, because sin and flesh is their only source. They are disconnected from the life giver. Jesus will win this battle, this night because pouring out His heart in prayer to His Father will keep Him connected to the source of all life and holiness and strength. That's our contrast. That's our take away.