

# Jesus in Gethsemane: The Broken Man

by Mack Tomlinson

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*Mack Tomlinson's sermon explores the profound significance of Gethsemane as a pivotal moment of Christ's emotional and spiritual suffering before the crucifixion.*

**Duration:** 43:49

**Scripture:** Mark 14:32

**Topics:** "The Cross", "Christ's Humanity"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the profound significance of Christ's experience in Gethsemane, highlighting the unique and intense agony He faced as a true human being, anticipating the horrors of the cross, the weight of sin, and the loneliness of being separated from the Father. It emphasizes the humanity and agony of Jesus in this one-time event, revealing the depth of His suffering and the necessity of understanding Gethsemane as a crucial part of His redemptive work.

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## Transcript

Mark 14, beginning in verse 32. I'm reading from the ESV translation of the Bible. Whatever copy of God's Word you have, you follow with me as I read.

Mark 14, 32. And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, sit here while I pray.

And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.

And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Remove this cup from me.

Yet not what I will, but what You will. And he came and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

The Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy and they did not know what to answer him.

And he came a third time and said to them, are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough. The hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise. Let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.

May God bless the reading and hearing of His Word. Christ and Gethsemane, a broken man. Gethsemane was a one-time event.

Gethsemane occurred just once. And until the cross in a few hours from this moment, Gethsemane may be the most significant important event in all of history. These Christ events, which were unique to Him, were all one-time occurrences.

His virgin birth, His incarnation, His miraculous ministry, His sinless life, His ascension after His resurrection, the one-time event of Pentecost, one future second coming that will close all of history, one-time events. So it was with Gethsemane. The passion experience of our Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane.

One single event was never, never happened before and would never be repeated again. That really 12 hours, if you will, of His passion in Gethsemane, His arrest, His trial, His crucifixion. There's never been a day and a night like that ever since.

There's only one Gethsemane and it was Christ alone. There's only been one Calvary and it was His alone. Because Gethsemane was within the huge shadow of the cross.

The shadow of the cross was looming huge over the garden of Gethsemane because it would happen the next morning. And we've probably not ever seen clearly, because of that, Gethsemane's significance and importance. It's easy to pass over it, isn't it? As we're reading, on our way to read the event of the crucifixion, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It's easy just to get to the cross in the gospel records and see Gethsemane as just a little speed bump, if you will. Almost as a smaller thing, but Gethsemane was not a small thing. Gethsemane is huge and it's shocking and it's amazing what happened to this man in the garden of Gethsemane.

And it's a huge, significant thing to understand Gethsemane more as a part of our understanding of the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. There's no area of biblical truth more important than the person and work of Christ. Whatever time you have to read and study, if you have time for nothing else, read and study and meditate upon and delve into the person and the glory and the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His earthly life was astounding. His words, His earthly ministry, His miracles, and more and more seeing His suffering and His temptation as He headed toward the cross. The written words of the Bible, the written human words of the Bible, though perfectly inspired, cannot fully convey the reality and the divine glory you see in our Savior's life and in His suffering and His death.

In the man Christ Jesus. One of those things that we've never appreciated enough, at least I can say I've never appreciated enough, nor have I seen the depths of the reality of what's here, is His experience in Gethsemane. What that place and what that event was and meant, what it involved, is so profound, so astonishing and mysterious, its significance has never received really among believers the focus that it deserves, Christ in Gethsemane.

What happened there? And what does it really mean? Mark's words are, a place called Gethsemane. John, in John 18, called it a garden. It was a garden that they entered into.

Gethsemane was a significant place during the three years of our Lord's earthly ministry. It was in the area, of course, in the immediate vicinity of the main part of Jerusalem. It was an olive orchard, a grove of olive trees where olives were harvested.

There was an olive press there for the crushing of olives, for the making, gathering, harvesting of olive oil. It must have belonged to someone the Lord Jesus knew, or at least some of the disciples possibly knew, because He and the disciples spent time there regularly, didn't they, over the three years. They would retire there.

A place of retreat, a place of rest, a place to sleep at times, pray, be together. And Gethsemane was the last place the Lord Jesus goes to. The last place He's in the night before He's arrested.

Indeed, it is in that place after He rises and He sees Judas and the mob coming, approaching. It's the last place He is when He's arrested the night before His death. Gethsemane was a significant and a special place to the Lord Jesus Christ.

But it was not only a place. Gethsemane for Him was an experience unlike any other experience that He had. The worst experience of His human life up to this point happened in Gethsemane.

Suddenly, not all that long, but I'm convinced it was worse than the 40 days of temptation in the wilderness three years earlier. Because the two most unimaginable, horrific experiences of His life happened in the next 12 to 15 hours. What He experienced in Gethsemane.

What He's going to on Calvary's cross. Gethsemane and Calvary. And if Calvary was a spiritual and physical torture, Gethsemane hours before was certainly a spiritual and mental, psychological torture.

It was the dark night of His soul, to borrow a phrase from literature. Christ's dark night of the soul as a man was Gethsemane. Christ is a broken, passive man in Gethsemane.

In a very, very real way. Someone wrote these words. Joy is a partnership, but grief weeps alone.

Many guests had Cana's wedding, but Gethsemane just won. Because our Lord goes there with the twelve, but then He calls the inner three further in with Him, and then He proceeds to go on further alone. Joy is a partnership, but grief weeps alone.

Many guests had Cana's wedding, but Gethsemane just won. And when we look closely at His Gethsemane experience, it becomes clear that it really was His biggest battle, His biggest human battle as a man, as our Savior. Bigger than the wilderness experience.

Bigger than three years of the scribes and Pharisees challenging Him, manipulating Him, trying to trick Him, trying to catch Him. Bigger than the patience He needed for three years with these disciples. Gethsemane was all He could take, humanly.

And it's almost as if when you read these accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it really is as if He almost can't take it. And we'll see why, I hope, here in a measure. All the synoptic Gospels record Gethsemane.

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22. John doesn't record Gethsemane. He just mentions, and you turn with me to John 18, and I want us to see something that's important.

John doesn't mention the experience. In John 18, John only records briefly that they went there. But there's something to notice here that's very important.

John 18.1, John says, When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples across the Kidron Valley, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. Alright, stop right there. The next words in verse 2. Now Judas, who betrayed Him.

So between verse 1 and verse 2 is the Gethsemane experience. Because when Jesus finishes His agony in Gethsemane, He says to the disciples, Rise, let's be going. Behold, Judas is at hand.

So the experience goes between John 18.1 and 18.2. That's what we find here. John leaves it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for Matthew and Mark and Luke to all record it. As John often did, one of the characteristics of John's gospel was that he doesn't record and tell some stories and experiences and events that all the synoptic gospel writers do record.

Likewise, John records things uniquely that Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not. What does Mark show us here about the significance of the Gethsemane experience? A couple of major things. And I want these to be etched in our minds today.

Because we cannot understand the humanity of the reality of the passion and suffering of Jesus Christ on the way to the cross without seeing what Gethsemane really, really meant. The first thing about implication is to observe is our Savior's humanity in this experience. His humanity shines forth in the garden because of the difficulty of the experience.

His humanity. Here in Gethsemane, we get a bigger glimpse of this as we come face to face with the real implications and the evidences that this was a true man who's going through this. A true human being.

His deity was not shielding him where it made it easier. What he's experiencing here, he experienced as we would have experienced it. He is us.

That is, he's one of us fully. And all the Gospels reveal this clearly. That he's a true man.

Not just fully God. Fully, truly, completely true humanity in every way. So, because that's true, as he comes to Gethsemane, he's not feeling anything as he enters into the garden as far as the struggle.

But suddenly, we're going to see, suddenly it comes on him like a wave. And as a man, he's seeing the cross. He's seeing before his heart, before his eyes and his spirit.

And he's feeling all of it. And he begins to dread it in the deepest way as a true man. Why? Because Gethsemane is the door of revelation of a foretaste of the horror of the cross.

We must approach Gethsemane just like Calvary with the deepest reverence. There's mystery here. There's awe here.

There's silence here. We must shut our mouths and bow in reverence and see the man of sorrows here suffering as one of us. For here in the garden, great mystery is happening.

See him prostrate in the garden, the hymn writer says, on the ground your Maker lies. God is prostrate on His face in the garden in prayer, in agony, the God-man Jesus Christ. Remember what his being truly human means.

His physical body has always been a normal human physical body. No special built-in resistance in him to pain. A normal human brain, a normal mind, emotions, feelings, thoughts.

He took it all in as we do in his human experience. He was no superhero. He felt all the physical and emotional and mental pains and weaknesses and challenges that we do.

He shared our human experience for 33 years as a weak old baby. Think of it. As a weak old baby when he was circumcised.

He would have screamed in pain and he would have cried for days in his mother's arms until healing sets in naturally. He would have grown physically. He did grow physically and he had physical limitations just like us.

No different. No different physically, emotionally, mentally. As he grew, he had limits.

You know he grew very tired, weary. He would fall asleep on the boat. Weary, he leaned on Jacob's well.

Hungry, thirsty. He saw the fig tree. He was hungry.

He wanted some figs to eat. Weary, needy, the lonely, weary Jesus. Having like us to trust God and walk with God through a waste, howling wilderness of a sinful world.

He had no immunity to protect him from the full human experience that you have. From the true, frail condition of what it means to be human. So in Gethsemane, it's a horrible torture of a true human being's mind and heart.

In a few hours, it's going to be the unmeasured torture of his physical body. But here is the torture of his mind and his heart and his spirit. Because in the garden, Christ becomes a broken man.

Broken, shattered. Where all He can do is agonize and cry and pray in desperate condition for help. The only way of understanding Gethsemane here is here's a genuine, real man who's one of us and He's going through this.

Gethsemane, as I've alluded, seems to be the worst mental, emotional experience our Savior ever had in 33 years. He thought it was going to kill Him. Because He says, doesn't He? My soul is exceedingly troubled even unto death.

He thought this was going to crush Him. The worst traumatic experience. His humanity, dear brothers and sisters, is in full view here.

You'll never see the humanity of your dear Savior more than in Gethsemane. But in Gethsemane, we see the second great reality. And that is His agony.

Because He's one of us, because He was truly one of us, this was an agonizing experience. The writer of the hymn I Stand Amazed in the Presence of Jesus the Nazarene. You ever heard the hymn? It says this, He had no tears for His own grief, but shed drops of blood for mine.

Is that true? No. Oh, He shed drops of blood for our grief. But He had tears for His own grief.

I believe that with all my heart. He was truly one of us and He was grieving and weeping and broken over the grief and torture that was immediately upon Him. He did have tears for His own grief.

Hebrews 5.7 said, He prayed with great strong cries and tears unto Him who was able to deliver Him through death. And He was heard because of His reverence, because of His godly fear. He had tears for His own grief.

He did have the deepest feelings and the deepest pain, the deepest sorrows. And He did shed His blood for ours, for mine. This was agony of the highest order.

What does Mark show us here about His agony? Look at it with me. In the text, how does Mark reveal that? The descriptions Mark gives and Matthew and Luke, we won't turn to those, but the descriptions given show Jesus' experience here of His agony. Verse 33.

He began to be greatly distressed and troubled. Verse 34. And He doesn't hold this in.

He vents it. He expresses it. My soul is very sorrowful even unto death.

Luke 22 says it even more clearly. And being in agony, Luke uses the word agony, He prayed more earnestly. The agony suddenly started, drove Him to His knees in prayer.

And then it drove Him to prostrate Himself and He agonized in prayer. The greatest thing any human being could have heard. The most awe-inspiring thing to ever hear in recorded history would have been to hear Him praying in the garden.

But no ears truly heard these deepest cries because He withdrew alone. Only the Father was hearing. Greatly distressed, troubled, very sorrowful in agony.

This is the descriptive language. And we must realize that His agony, this experience, was sudden and even surprising to Him. He enters the garden from teaching, from praying, from the upper room discourse.

John 17, the high priestly prayer. He's praying for us, praying for the believers, for the disciples, for the church. And then He comes with the disciples into the garden of Gethsemane.

They enter in. And He's normal. He's not experiencing any of this yet.

He had not felt it before entering the garden. Upon entering the garden, this hasn't hit Him. And Mark says He began to be greatly distressed and troubled.

And suddenly He falls on the ground and begins to pray. It's as if it hits Him and He wasn't prepared for the suddenness or the force of it. Gethsemane has been called the divine dereliction.

It has all started. Suddenly, it comes upon Him. The advanced, final suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The garden is suffering that hits Him. The kiss of betrayal soon of a friend is suffering. The mock trial, the beatings, being spit upon by the soldiers is suffering.

The slaps and the stripping off of His clothes where He stood naked before them is suffering. The crown of thorns pushed down on His head is suffering. The mockery, the public, vicious, verbal ridicule is

suffering.

The floggings, the carrying of the cross in His weakness, the nails, the lifting up on the cross, the public scandal of crucifixion. As a worst criminal, an imposter, He bears hours and hours and hours of suffering even before the cross takes its thud in the ground and He's hanging. You see, the atonement.

Gethsemane is showing us the atonement is a process. Heaven in Gethsemane is beginning to deal with the Lamb of God. God is delivering the Son here to His atoning work.

Gethsemane is the real beginning of those final sorrows. Until Gethsemane, Christ has work to do. Hitherto I work and my Father works.

He has work to do. Preaching, praying, teaching, healing, washing feet. Not in the garden.

He's suffering. He's bearing. He's receiving.

As one has said, the clock of God has now struck and God is thrusting His Son into redemptive darkness where all He can do is suffer and cry out. This is a surprising new experience. A surprising sudden new state of experience for the Savior.

Like nausea when suddenly it sweeps over you and it's on you. Like a bad migraine that hits you and you're captive to it. You can't escape it.

Suddenly you have it. It was an attack of feeling and emotional dread that somehow swept over Him. And He's suddenly greatly distressed, greatly agitated and overwhelmed.

What explains this? Something new has happened to Him. Either the Father suddenly, by the Spirit's revelation, begins to show Him and give Him glimpses of the horror and the hell of the suffering and the guilt and being the scapegoat. Either the Father is revealing suddenly to Him what He's never had revealed to Him before or He's simply being allowed to even now begin the process of redemption.

Feeling the sorrows. Feeling the sin. Feeling the reality.

It swells over Him. It rolls over Him and overwhelms Him. With the deepest sorrow and reluctance, He begins to draw back.

And guess what? The man Jesus doesn't want to go through it. He doesn't want it. Horrible feelings.

Greatly distressed. The word for greatly distressed is feelings of terrified surprise under the oppression of experiencing mentally, emotionally. He's tasting suddenly all the evil, the sin, the judgment, the horror.

God only knows what. It hits Him with a force of stunning effect and it knocks Him to His knees. And then it knocks Him further.

He's prostrate on His face like getting the breath knocked out of Him. Like being scared out of your wits. His atoning identification as the Lamb, as the sacrifice, He's entering it now.

He's feeling it fully. Tomorrow, within a few hours, the next morning, it's going to happen. See the man of sorrows here.

See the broken man of Gethsemane. He's a weak man. He's an overwhelmed man.

He's an anxious man. He's a stressed man. Here's a man that is absolutely emotionally wrung out and empty and broken.

Jeffrey Thomas says this. In Gethsemane, Jesus is like a poor helpless child crying to His Father asking for help. He's a Savior who goes from being in complete control in the upper room to being a Savior who is stumbling, feeling heaviness of spirit, trembling and crushed under the load.

We need that exact Savior. Not one who's always cool and collected. We won't wash the bloody sweat from His face or try to lift Him off the ground, give Him some water and say, come on now, Jesus, it's not that bad.

It was that bad. We need this Savior, this exact Savior who's felt far more human pain and agony and tears and groans and dread and having to choose to embrace the hardest because this was God's will. This was the Father's will.

We need such a Savior who's entered and experienced the human experience far more than any other human ever in life. He's a basket case here, our Savior is, who is going through it all for us. Oh Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head! Our load was laid on Thee.

It's severe agony. He's gripped and ripped by it. He's rocked by it.

He's feeling it. He's shaken. He's anxious.

He doesn't hold it all inside, but He gives full expression to it. My soul. He verbalizes it.

He says it on the ground. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to death. It was so shocking and horrible and forceful and dreadful, He thought it was going to kill Him.

He thought it was going to take His life even before He got to the cross. One writer on Gethsemane said, this experience brought the man Jesus to the very limits of His endurance. As the whole picture denotes, an overwhelming agony beyond comprehension.

Now, some reasons why it was so agonizing. We don't know them all. We can't fathom them.

Only He knew them. But there were some obvious reasons why such agony. First, He was facing within a few hours a hideous and horrible death.

Had He not observed Roman crucifixions in His years, more than likely, it's safe to presume He had observed criminals crucified on Roman crosses. He knew what was involved. The hour, the cup, are upon Him.

He's within hours of being up there, hanging helpless in torture, being the sacrificial Lamb of the ages of all of history. That was hitting Him. It was producing agony.

Next, think of it. He's always been free from any contact with sin or evil. Pure, spotless Lamb.

Impeccable. Absolute holiness. Absolute purity.

As a man. Holy. undefiled.

Separate from sinners, the Bible says. Yet, not the next day. Not tomorrow morning.

That will end. The time's here when He who knew no sin was going to be made sin for us. And He was going to experience as a substitute sinfulness, guilt, judgment, condemnation, evil, darkness.

He's going to feel it. The impurity, the vileness, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. This One, Christ, the Source of all purity and moral perfection, sins and all guilt will be poured upon Him.

The sins of the world. Every sin you've ever committed, He was bearing the load of it that night in Gethsemane. And He was going to take it the next day on the cross.

It was overwhelming. It was too much to take in. Human hatred and bitterness and pride and lust and wickedness.

He committed no sin but was made sinful in our place. The world has seen a man as sinless as God. The man Christ Jesus.

But in a few hours, for the first time in His eternal existence, He's going to taste sin and impurity. And there was no filter to keep any of its vileness back from Him to make it easier. An adult gets a full dose of medicine.

A child gets a lesser dose. Christ got no lesser dose. He got an unlimited dose of sin and degradation poured out upon Him.

And that's hitting Him in Gethsemane. He's feeling this coming on when He's in the Garden. His face is on the ground.

He's anticipating it. Realizing it's soon to be His. And this must have hit Him.

And it buckles Him under the pressure. Anticipating in a few short moments, He's going to go from complete godliness to experiencing complete sinfulness. And this had to have caused His agony.

What else would have been in His agony? His loneliness. Full loneliness. True human loneliness.

The uttermost loneliness. The worst loneliness. He was the loneliest man who ever lived at times.

Why? Why would this have been hitting Him? Because He knows, He realizes, and He's facing imminently right now He's soon to lose His Father's fellowship. He knows He's going to be cut off. He's going to lose God in those moments.

Now was there ever a moment the Father didn't love Him and was not pleased fully with Him? Absolutely. I'm talking about our Savior's experience. He was going to lose all intimacy and closeness in a sense of the presence of the Father and the presence of the Holy Spirit was going to be withdrawn.

It truly seems in all eternity He had had perfect communion and intimacy with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Now we've all felt a little drop of loneliness. Haven't we in life? A loss here, a death there, losing a friend, moving far away and you have to leave those you love.

We're social creatures. The Lord Jesus Christ was a perfect social human creature. Christ the Divine Son was not a creature, Creator, but the man Christ Jesus came into being in the womb of Mary's virgin womb.

The man Christ Jesus, His humanity, was created by the Holy Spirit and joined the divine nature of the Son of God. He became the God-man. The Lord Jesus as a man was perfectly social.

But what is our loneliness compared to that of the man Christ Jesus? His experience of loneliness. The one thing that would happen the next day on the cross, being abandoned by the Father, was unknown territory to Jesus. It would have been a terrifying experience.

The utter loss, the full loss of God's presence. And Jesus doesn't know what this is going to be like. Tomorrow, He's going to walk through the dark valley of the loss, the genuine loss of the presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Cut off. Left alone. No longer experiencing the Father's presence and promises and cares and comforts and answers.

The Father's not going to answer Him. No relief. No deliverance.

All unavailable. Left abandoned. Under judgment.

Bearing sin. It was an unbearable revelation in Gethsemane. Those thoughts and feelings were real.

And He began to say to Himself and out loud, Can I handle this? Can I take it? Is there another way? I don't want this hour. I don't want this cup. Let it pass from Me.

Is it possible for Me not to have to go through this? Father, if there's any way, let it pass from Me, please. Aren't You thankful for the nevertheless? Not my will. That was real.

He had to choose that. In Gethsemane, He's experiencing the birth pains, the contractions of the coming rejection, loneliness, sinfulness, utter horror of Calvary. He's facing the hour.

He's facing drinking the cup. And He wants it to pass. Christ in His humanity agonizes in the garden.

O sacred head now wounded with grief and shame weighed down. What Thou, my Lord, has suffered was all for sinners gain. Mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain.

And that pain didn't start on Calvary. It started in Gethsemane. And we must learn to say and we must learn to plumb the depths of seeing Him in Gethsemane.

We must say with Amy Carmichael, O my Master, I have known Thee on the roads and on the sea. Why then have I not known Thee broken in Gethsemane? The Master replies, I would have Thee follow and know Me. Thorn crowned, nailed upon the tree.

Can you follow? Will you know Me? All the way to Calvary. But to get to Calvary, He had to go through Gethsemane. Meditate much on our Savior's experience in Gethsemane.

It makes the cross all the more wondrous and glorious and amazing. We often sing marvelous grace of our loving Lord. Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.

Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured. There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled. But I promise you, that marvelous grace was poured out even before Calvary in Gethsemane's garden by our broken man, our Savior.

He was broken there because He loved you. In the coming hours, He was going to save you, redeem you for eternity. Let's sing that marvelous grace.

Grace that is greater than all our sin. Let's sing it now if we can.

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