
“Let Us Be Going”

“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. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!’” (Matthew 26:45, 46).

At the end of Jesus’ third period of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, He turned to His sleeping apostles and told them, “Sleep on now, and take your rest” (Matthew 26:45; KJV; ASV). The NASB and the NIV picture Him as asking a question of them: “Are you still sleeping and resting?” The Greek text contains more of a statement of what should be done than a question. Jesus must have been implying by His remark, “The time of prayer is over. We have made all the preparation for this hour that we can make. The opportunity to brace ourselves through prayer and watchfulness for what is going to happen has now passed.” “Sleep on now” appears to be figurative for “go ahead and sleep, for the time of praying is over.”

Perhaps in the same moment that Jesus spoke these words, He raised His eyes and saw flickering lights in the direction of the Brook Kidron. With a resolute calmness and with His mind set upon carrying out the will of God to the fullest, He said, “Get up, let us be going.” The hour toward which He had looked from the outset of His ministry (John 2:4) was now at hand. The time to offer Himself as the sacrifice for sin had arrived; and, after His fervent prayers in Gethsemane, He was ready to face it.

What follows in the divine narratives of Jesus’ final night and day gives us a view of Jesus that enlightens our minds, stirs our souls, and challenges us to a deeper commitment to Him. Jesus emerged from the garden with a heart that was settled, with a resolve that was clearly fixed, and with a determination that would not

be overcome. All the powers of hell could not deter Him from what He had decided to do; all the arguments of Satan could not dissuade Him from His plan. Under an olive tree, He had prostrated Himself before God, had committed Himself to God’s will, and had won the fiercest battle against the dark powers of evil that He had ever fought.

Leaving His place of prayer, Jesus had complete control of the situation as He went out to meet the multitude approaching Him. John, who gave more details than the other Gospel writers regarding what happened next, said, “Judas then, having received the Roman cohort and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, came there [that is, to the garden] with lanterns and torches and weapons” (18:3). He further said, “So Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’” (18:4). Jesus was fully aware of all that was about to take place. He could envision the arrest, the trials, the scourging, and the crucifixion coming upon Him. Even knowing all this, He immediately went forward to put Himself into His enemies’ hands. He could have called legions of angels to rescue Him (Matthew 26:53); He could have slipped away into the darkness and avoided the arrest (John 10:39). Instead, assured and with deliberation, He went to them and asked, “Whom do you seek?” (John 18:4b).

Everything that was happening was according to the divine plan. Jesus had chosen the time and place of His arrest, even as He had chosen the time and place of His crucifixion. He had

earlier said, "I lay down My life so that I may take it again. . . . I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (John 10:17b, 18). In this garden He showed how true His words were. The story of the cross was not to be a story of what man did to Jesus, but a story of what Jesus did for man.

Whoever meditates upon these tragic events must be impressed by Jesus' calmness and confidence in facing them. He had prayed in agony in the garden until His body was strained to the breaking point, but afterward He had a composure which reflected the surrender that He had made to God's will and the resolution that He had made to be God's suffering servant for the sin of the world. As the Prince of all men, He controlled Himself and the violent circumstances that surrounded Him to the glory of God. Who else could have emerged from the awful trial in the garden and faced with such regal majesty this arrest that was so colored with betrayal and deception? Only a perfect human being, the Son of Man and the Son of God, could do it!

When the crowd told Him that they were seeking "Jesus the Nazarene," He said to them, "I am He." Some of the leaders of the crowd who were standing in the front "drew back and fell to the ground" (John 18:5, 6). They were so startled by His yielding Himself to them that they backed up, hitting those behind them. Then, losing their balance, they fell to the ground.

After picking themselves up and regrouping, they stood expectantly before Him again with their staves, torches, and swords. A second time, Jesus said to them, "Whom do you seek?" As if disoriented and confused, they said, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I told you that I am He" (18:7, 8). Jesus' calm response to their arrival defused (and confused) their anger and hostility. Had they thought clearly about the miracles He had worked, they would have realized that no sword, army, or nation on earth could take Jesus if He did not wish to give Himself over to them.

Even in this crucial hour, Jesus demonstrated His deep love for His own people. The group that had come to arrest Him said they wanted "Jesus the Nazarene" (John 18:7b). Jesus replied, "I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way" (John 18:8a). John said that He did this

"to fulfill the word which He spoke, 'Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one'" (John 18:9). He had committed Himself to these men, pledging that He would guide them and protect them as He prepared them to fulfill their apostolic mission. In His great high priestly prayer, He had prayed to His Father:

I ask on their behalf. . . . Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 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 (John 17:9-12).

Here, at the entrance to the garden, Jesus put Himself between His disciples and the violent multitude that had come to arrest Him. True to the way He had lived His earlier life, He thought of those who were with Him rather than thinking about Himself. He exemplified the words that Paul would later write: "Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Jesus' approach to His arrest gave Judas an additional opportunity to repent. Apparently, Jesus deliberately configured the circumstances of the arrest so that it would be unnecessary for Judas to identify Him, if he chose not to. The priests of the crowd were not sure that they would be able to focus on the right person, so they anticipated a need for Judas. They had entered into an agreement with him and had already paid him for his betrayal of Jesus. As Judas stood at the forefront of the group, Jesus approached them as if to say, "Here I am. Do what you have planned to do with Me!" This act of Jesus put Judas in a unique situation. In light of Jesus' words and actions, it was unnecessary for Judas to identify Jesus even though he had made the covenant with the priests to do so. Jesus revealed Himself to them so that Judas' help was not needed.

The crowd, expecting violence and a furor of conflict, was disarmed by Jesus' immediate response. His conduct quieted the troubled scene; for this mob, the arrest was a peaceful and almost trouble-free event. Still, ignoring the circumstance that Jesus had created and passing over this final opportunity to refuse

to do what he had agreed to do, Judas stepped out of the arresting party and said “Rabbi,” and kissed Him. At that point, the guards of the group laid their hands on Jesus, seizing Him and taking Him into custody.

This episode of the arrest of Jesus gives us insight into the flawless character of our Lord. What kind of Savior is He? This scene pictures Jesus as completely submissive to His Father’s will, regardless of what He had to go through to fulfill it. It shows that He possesses confidence and control, perfect wisdom, purity, and divine energy. Having these divine attributes, He will always be the Master of even the most foreboding circumstances. Further, this confrontation reveals Him as the good Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep—the Shepherd who, even in the most critical situations, puts His sheep before Him-

self. His handling of this ordeal reminds us that He is a Savior who will continually fight for a final opportunity for one to be saved, even though that soul may be bent on going astray with the Evil One. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

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Jesus came to die. He was the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world. His death on the cross was not the result of an orchestrated crowd overtaking Him. He chose the humiliation, the scourging, and the crucifixion. Satan did not control what happened; Jesus did. Jesus brought victory over sin by surrender. He saved those who believe by choosing deliberately to invest Himself in God’s redemptive plan.