

60. Jesus at Gethsemane

Luke 22:39-53

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

Jesus and His disciples have been reclining at the table together, and now, as the evening draws to a close, He begins to prepare them for His arrest.

³⁵Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” “Nothing,” they answered. ³⁶He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. ³⁷It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.” ³⁸The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.” “That’s enough!” he replied (Luke 22:35-38).

The Lord reminds His disciples of the time He had sent them out to heal the sick and preach about the coming of the Kingdom of God. At that time, He had instructed them to take no bread, no staff, no bag or money, and no spare cloak. Now He instructs them to be prepared for any journey by taking money and a bag, and yes, even to buy a sword to defend themselves (v. 36), because they are about to experience opposition of the highest order, both natural and spiritual. The enemy, Satan and his demons, will throw at them all kinds of things to try and stop their preaching and the forward movement of God’s kingdom on earth. Each one of us as believers must decide within our own hearts how we are to interpret this passage, because previously Jesus had stated; ³⁹“But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰“If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. ⁴¹“Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two (Matthew 5:39-41). On this occasion, however, Jesus told the disciples to buy a sword. Was the sword to defend themselves against animals on the way, or to defend themselves against evil people?

In saying that we should resist evil, does that mean we should allow our families, or other innocents to be killed in front of us by those whose motive is to destroy us? I personally don’t think so. There may be times when as Christians we should be passive in the hope of stopping violence from escalating, but how far should this go? Should we not resist the “Adolf Hitler’s” of this world by taking action? At the beginning of the Second World War, when Neville Chamberlain came back to Britain with a signed letter of peace by Adolf Hitler, thank God for Winston Churchill who stood up against evil and spoke the truth, leading Britain to defend herself against that evil regime! We can think of many examples in history when God used brave men and women to stand up against evil. When the disciples found two swords, He said to them, “It is enough.” Some commentators say that Jesus was saying this out of exasperation, that He had heard enough of ideas that were contrary to His teaching. If that was the case, why did He allow Peter to even carry a sword into the Garden of Gethsemane? Jesus knew that they had swords, and we know that Peter tried to defend the disciples by striking the high priest’s servant, and cutting off his ear (v. 50). In my opinion, He was saying two swords would be sufficient for His disciples to defend themselves. Jesus clearly did not want them to pursue violence, and He did heal the high priest’s servant, but it could be that He also wanted the disciples to be able to protect themselves if needed. Otherwise, why would He tell them to sell their cloak in order to buy a sword (v. 36)? Jesus knew they were taking swords into the garden and even encouraged

it, although He did not carry one. It was clear that Jesus knew His time had come for Him to be delivered into the hands of evil men in order to fulfill His Father's ultimate plan of redemption.

Question 1) Have you ever felt it necessary to use force in order to protect yourself, a loved one, or your country? What motivated you to take action as you did? Briefly share if you are able.

The Place of the Olive Press

It was late in the evening when the disciples left the Upper Room where they had eaten the Last Supper together. Tradition tells us that the room was to the west of the Old City of Jerusalem. They walked eastwards together to the Mount of Olives situated on the eastern side of the Temple Mount, crossing the Kidron valley that separated the Mount of Olives from Herod's temple. Luke tells us that this was His usual place to stay the night, sleeping under the stars. Even though He knew that Judas was about to bring the temple guards there to arrest Him, He still went to the place Judas knew of. The arrest was no surprise to Jesus; He knew how much time He had to pray and had no thought of escape or avoiding what was coming. Matthew and Mark both tell us that the place was called Gethsemane, whereas John calls it an olive grove. Luke just says the place was the Mount of Olives. Passover always coincided with the full moon, which afforded the disciples the opportunity to look in on the scene that took place. The Mount of Olives was so called because of the many olive trees growing there. Gethsemane literally means the place of the olive press. Olive oil was used for lighting, and perhaps was the very source of the huge candelabra's that lit up the temple and the surrounding area of Jerusalem at night. The oil was extracted by crushing the olives in the press, maybe the very press there in the Garden of Gethsemane.

³⁹Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." ⁴¹He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴²"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." ⁴³An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶"Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Luke 22:39-46).

What was happening there on the Mount of Olives? That's the big question we want to answer with our study today. In this passage, we see Jesus confronting His own death. In the Garden, we get a picture of what was going through His mind as He talks to His Father in prayer. We see the state of His heart and the thoughts He had in those final hours of His mortal life on earth. It seems significant that He who called Himself *the* Light of the World (John 8:12), would go through a crushing and pressing experience there in Gethsemane, the place of the olive press. The Lord also said that we as Christians are also lights of the world (Matthew 5:14). If we desire to shine brightly for God, we also will be taken by the Spirit into the darkness of a Gethsemane experience, where we will have to make spiritual choices to relinquish our wills to Christ. Many of us have come to Christ by going through a broken and pressing experience that has caused us to wonder about what would happen to us when we die, or wonder about the meaning of our

lives. The Lord allows a Gethsemane in our lives. In Gethsemane we are tempted to give in to our flesh to do whatever would please us or give us some relief. Life teaches us that the easy way is not always the right way. We can answer to our fears and our appetites, or we can seek a higher way. During these times, we face crossroads in our lives. We can take the easy road or we can take the “Christ road.” The Christ road will bring us pain at times, but it is the way of fruitfulness. The road to maturity is the way of the Cross. The Lord allows growth spurts to come to our lives by giving us situations designed by God to prompt faith-filled choices. These choices at seem counter-intuitive when viewed in the light of self-preservation. In our Gethsemane experiences, we can trust the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the way to go. He will reveal the choices that honor God and keep us true. He will give us the strength and ability to choose the right way, if that is what we desire. Although it may be hard, He offers us His strength and peace when we face our own temptations. He will always leave us to make the choice.

Question 2) What was the temptation that Jesus warned His disciples about when He encouraged them to pray? (v.46). What temptation was the Lord Himself facing? Why would He be in anguish?

When they arrived in Gethsemane, Christ went from them a stone’s throw distance and Luke tells us that He fell to His knees to pray (v. 41). Matthew tells us that at times His posture was one of lying down with His face to the ground in impassioned prayer:

³⁷He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." ³⁹Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:37-39).

The phrase, “overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death” is quite a descriptive phrase and leaves us wondering what was going on inside His soul. Whatever it was that He was going through, Jesus described it as being so overwhelming as to bring Him close to death (v. 38). Such was the intensity that He begged for prayer support, saying to the disciples, “Stay here and keep watch with me” (Matthew 26:38). Mark, in his gospel, describes Jesus as being “deeply distressed and troubled” (Mark 14:33). The writer to the Hebrews also wrote about Jesus in the garden, saying, “he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death” (Hebrews 5:7). The English King James Bible translates the same verse with the words: “He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.” Luke describes Jesus as: “being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling down to the ground” (v.44). The Greek word translated *anguish* is where we get our English word *agony*. The Greek word is used in terms of someone fighting a battle with sheer fear.¹

Jim Bishop, in his book *The Day Christ Died*, comments on his sweat being like drops of blood:

“Medically, this is called haematidrosis. It occurs when fear is piled upon fear, when an agony of suffering is laid upon an older suffering until the highly sensitized person can

¹ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of Luke*, Saint Andrew Press Publishers, Edinburgh, Page 271.

no longer sustain the pain. At that moment, the patient ordinarily loses consciousness. When that does not happen, the subcutaneous capillaries sometimes dilate so broadly that, when they come into contact with the sweat glands the little capillaries burst. The blood is exuded with the perspiration and, usually, this occurs all over the body.”²

I have read of this happening during the Second World War when Germany was bombing London in what was known as the Blitz. The daily pressure of the bombing brought a number of cases where this occurred. The stress of fear was so great, that it caused some people to literally sweat blood.

There are some scholars that interpret this verse to mean: “his sweat was like drops of blood,” and that He didn’t actually bleed. They reason that Jesus was sweating so hard, it was “as if He were bleeding.” They say that He could have been sweating from the energy of His impassioned praying or because of stress. Passover falls in our calendar between the months of March and April, and it is usually cold in Jerusalem due to being situated higher in the mountains. Later on, Peter had warmed himself by the fire with those that had arrested Jesus in the courtyard of Caiaphas. If it was just sweat, why would blood be mentioned? This would have been difficult to see in the moonlight at a stone’s throw distance away, but perhaps when He came to wake up the disciples, they noticed that He had been sweating. If it were blood, it would have been evident by the color of His tunic when He came near. I leave you to decide which interpretation you find to be the most believable. Personally, I think that the scriptures mention drops of blood because He was literally sweating blood, due to the extreme anguish and stress that He was going through in the garden.

What Was in the Cup?

Question 3) What do you think is meant by His words, “may this cup be taken from me?” (v. 42). What does the cup represent, and why would He want it to pass from Him?

There are two things that were seen as a cup that He had to drink to the dregs.

1) The first is that the cup was a picture of the wrath of God that was deserved by you and me:

Awake, awake! Rise up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger (Isaiah 51:17; read also Jeremiah 25:15-17).

We deserved spiritual death because of the sins and choices that we have made in our lives. In the Garden of Eden, God told Adam that when you eat of the fruit on the tree of knowledge of good and evil you would surely die. Adam did not die physically the day he ate, but spiritually he and everyone else born into the world, was separated from God and a barrier between God and man existed (Isaiah 59:2), a state of death in the eyes of God. The prophet Ezekiel spoke about this punishment on sin, when he said, “The soul who sins is the one who will die” (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Sin had to be judged or God would be accused of injustice. The punishment of sin must be maintained, God cannot just overlook sin and justice. For God to be love and just, the God of

² The Day Christ Died by Jim Bishop. Harper San Francisco Publishers. Page 169.

love came to pay the punishment in order that we may be freed from the penalty of sin. Matthew tells us of the one prayer that the Father denies Jesus, “if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me” (Matthew 26:39). Christ would have to endure the full punishment of separation from God on the cross, “Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lemasabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) (Matthew 27:46).

This God that we love and serve has made no other way of escape other than that His Beloved Son should go through this time of humiliation, pulling at His beard, spitting in His face, and flaying the skin off of His back, culminating in the torturous death of being crucified. There was no other way, no other solution. He didn't tell man to wait until Mohammed. He didn't change His salvation plan and tell man to go and see the Buddha. There was only ONE WAY and it involved God Himself becoming the substitute. Here we see the love of God revealed. God planned Operation Redemption. He Himself would pay the substitution ransom, the sacrificial price. The price is free for us but it cost God His Son! He would take man's place. The judgment was firm and just, the soul that sins shall die, but Jesus, God's Son would take our place, the just for the unjust to bring us to God.

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).

The love of God said “no” to Jesus. It was not possible for there to be any other way but that He should take the cup and drink God's wrath on sin to the dregs.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

When we truly understand all that God has done for us, the only response is love for the One who has made our freedom and deliverance from sin possible. Self-sacrifice is the “God way”. The way of the cross is the only way to God.

2) The second thing that was seen as a cup that He had to drink was the temptation to walk away from what He faced. What was before Him was more than humiliation at the hands of evil men, and more than being crucified. Let us consider His temptation. When we struggle against sin, the temptation that comes to us is to seek for holiness from our sinful thoughts and actions. As Christians, our fight is against sin in three different battlefields all at the same time. The world system we live in, our own sinful nature, and our adversary, the devil and his demons. The writer to the Hebrews spoke of the temptation that we all face, saying that however hard we fight, it is nowhere near the unseen fight that Jesus faced in the garden that night. “In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (Hebrews 12:4).

Our struggle is to be holy when our natural tendency, our default nature, is toward sin. It was totally different, though, for our Lord Jesus. He had never known sin. He has always been Holy. He was born of a virgin and by the Holy Spirit. Christ was not conceived in the normal way, and, therefore, did not take on a sinful nature. He remained free from sin all His life, in order that he would die as an innocent Lamb for us and as us. The apostle Peter had been around Him for more than three years, yet he said about Christ: “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found

in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). As a Holy being, Christ’s struggle that day in the garden was to put on sin and be the living embodiment of sin. His striving was not against sin, but to be sin when every fiber of His Holy being cried out against sin. “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor” (Habakkuk 1:13). His default nature, every impulse of His divine being, was to abhor sin, and yet He had to put on sin to make us holy. How wonderful is His love! “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The temptation He faced was to abandon His holiness and embrace sin, and not just sin, but all sin, of all time, and for the whole human race.

Perhaps one would say that Jesus wasn’t tempted for He was holy, but in fact, He was tempted much worse than us in order that He might be able to feel what we feel when we are tempted: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet he did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

What was distinctly different was that Christ would be separated from His Father for a time. When Christ hung on the cross, the sins of the world were laid upon Him, and the Father, who cannot look upon sin, left Christ for a time. The perfect character of Christ would be stained by sins of the blackest sort, every sin that you and I have ever committed were laid on Him. Not only sins committed in the present but also those of the past and future. That is why He cried out from the cross; “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). Those that believe that there are many ways to God, do not have an answer as to why the Father refused to take any other option other than His Son must drink the dregs of the cup. There was no other way. If there had been another way, God would have taken it, rather than see His Son suffer for the sins of man.

There was a spiritual battle going on in the unseen realm against Jesus. If we could have seen into the spiritual realm in the Garden of Gethsemane, perhaps we would have seen the forces of evil; powerful evil demonic beings seeking to dissuade Christ from obedience to the Father’s will. Jesus had a choice to make; would He lay down His own will so that the Father’s will be accomplished? The way of the cross invites all of us to lay down our will and relinquish it to God. Some say that Satan was trying to stop Christ going to the cross, while others say that the fight in the garden was to try to get Jesus to say no to the Father’s will. Satan didn’t really understand, though, what would be accomplished by Christ allowing Himself to be crucified, otherwise He would have stopped his minions from bringing it about:

None of the rulers of this age understood it. For if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Jesus Arrested

⁴⁷While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, ⁴⁸but Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" ⁴⁹When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" ⁵⁰And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. ⁵¹But Jesus answered,

"No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him. ⁵²Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? ⁵³Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns" (Luke 22:47-53).

Judas knew the place where Jesus often slept through the night, so he brought a detachment of Roman soldiers and officials from the religious elite. The Greek word *speira*, translated as "detachment" (John 18:3), is a term to designate a specific subgroup of Roman soldiers sent from the Antonia Fortress situated to the north of the Temple Mount, where Pilate, the Roman governor, had his garrison. This subgroup consisted of 450 fighting men. This was in addition to those sent from the Chief Priests and Pharisees. Some scholars have estimated that there may have been as many as six hundred soldiers and men from the religious elite.

Why so many? It was likely that they were expecting a fight and that there might be more of Christ's disciples in the garden with Him. They brought lanterns because, perhaps, they were expecting Jesus to hide. The Lord didn't wait for them to come looking for Him, He took the initiative; He went out of the garden to them (John 18:4). His concern was for His disciples so that His prayer of protection in John 17 would be answered during the arrest. He was in control of the whole situation. The apostle John gives us a bit more information as to what happened. Jesus asked them, "Who is it you want?" ⁵⁴"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁵⁵"When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground (John 18:4-6).

Question 4) What do you think caused the soldiers to fall to the ground? What was happening?

Roman soldiers were not known to be fearful about anything, and they certainly were not known to fall on the ground easily. They were ready for anything as they approached the garden. Imagine the scene. When they said they were looking for Jesus, the Lord replied uttering the divine name in Greek, the name of God, "I AM" (*egō eimi*). Some of you have the words, ***I am he*** in the text, but the word "He" is absent from the original Greek and added by the translators to make the statement easier to understand in English. Again and again in the Gospels, we have seen Jesus adding the name of God to different aspects of His character. I am the Gate; I am the Good Shepherd, I am the Light of the World, I am the Way, etc. When He said those words, this was a display of raw spiritual power before these soldiers. Jesus was letting the soldiers know that He was willingly giving Himself into their hands. What a picture it must have been, hundreds of men terrified of one Man and His eleven disciples, and only one of them is using a sword in defense.

In his usual rash behavior, Peter slashed at the high priest's servant named Malchus with his sword, severing the man's ear. Peter was risking a fight at this point, but the Lord intervenes and gently reminds His disciples to put up the sword, reminding Peter that it must be this way, that there is a cup of suffering that He must drink to put away sin for all men. Why don't the 450-600 men attack Peter and the disciples? It seems that the presence of the Lord had unsettled the soldiers. Luke tells us that Jesus put His hand to Malchus' ear, and it miraculously sprouted another ear— "he touched the man's ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51). Notice that the healing

was instantaneous. This was a creative miracle right at the point of greatest tension. There was no hunting around for the ear so that Christ can heal the man by putting the ear back on and for it to be bandaged up. I wonder if Malchus found the ear that had been cut off after the Lord was taken away. It is the apostle John who tells us that it was Peter.

In Matthew's account, Jesus told them to put up their swords, and that it must be this way:

⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matthew 26:53-54).

Christ was in control at every point. He didn't run away. He confronted the armed soldiers. We might not always know what will happen to us when we say, "Your will be done," but there is a peace that passes all understanding when our lives and will are given into His hands. Many of you are at the cross roads of Gethsemane. Submitting to God's will is the big question: will you submit to His purpose for your life? Will you lay down your will and place your life into His hands? God's Word tells us:

"fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

Prayer: Thank you for the choice you made in Gethsemane, Lord. I know it was for my friends and me. You looked forward and saw each of us, and joy came to your heart, which strengthened you for what you endured. Help me to place my will and my life in Your hands and trust You. Amen.

Keith Thomas

Email: keiththomas@groupbiblestudy.com

Website: www.groupbiblestudy.com