

Title: **AGONY IN GETHSEMANE**
Text: Luke 22:39-46
Subject: *Christ's Agony in Gethsemane*
Date: Sunday Evening — February 26, 2006
Tape # Y-91a

Introduction:

(Luke 22:39-46) “And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. (40) And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. (41) And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, (42) Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. (43) And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. (44) And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (45) And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, (46) And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

We come now with the Son of God into his favorite place of prayer, the garden of Gethsemane. The word *Gethsemane*, means *olive press*. What a fitting place Gethsemane was for the events which transpired on this dark, dark night. Here, the Lord of glory wept in agony of soul, prayed with a heavy, broken heart, and began to have his soul crushed in anticipation of being made sin for us. So heavy was the burden of his heart that the pores of his flesh poured with a bloody sweat!

I never read this passage and its parallels in Mathew, Mark, and John without a great sense of utter ignorance and inability. How can a mortal man of sinful flesh comprehend what our Master experienced in Gethsemane? It is simply impossible. You can imagine how utterly insufficient I feel in attempting to preach to you from such a text as this.

May God the Holy Spirit direct my every thought and grant me wisdom and grace to speak now to your hearts for the honor and glory of our dear Savior and your souls' everlasting good.

I will not attempt to expound the verses before us. That I know is a task too great for this man. Our text contains things which the wisest of faithful, godly men cannot explain. Instead, I want us to simply look at our Savior and his disciples as they are set before us in this passage and learn the lessons which are obvious.

OUR SAVIOR'S AGONY

What was the cause of our Savior's agony? What was the cause of this great heaviness and sorrow, this grief and agony of our blessed Redeemer's soul? What was it that crushed our Master's heart? What so greatly disturbed him?

- Not The Fear Of Physical Pain.
- Not The Fear Of Death.
- Not Even the Fear Of Dying Upon The Cross.

That which crushed our Savior's heart was the anticipation of being made sin for us. The heavy, heavy burden which crushed his very soul was the enormous load of sin and guilt, the sin and guilt of all God's elect which was about to be imputed to him.

Our Savior's great sorrow was caused by his anticipation of being made sin for us. "It was," wrote J.C. Ryle, "a sense of the unutterable weight of our sins and transgressions which were then specially laid upon him."

- He who knew no sin was about to be made sin for us!
- He who is the only man really who knows what sin is, the only man who sees sin as God, was about to become sin!
- He who is the holy, harmless, undefiled Lamb of God, was about to be made a curse for us.
- The holy Son of God was about to be forsaken by his Father.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "*began to be sore amazed*" to be in great consternation and astonishment, at the sight of all the sins of his people coming upon him; at the black storm of wrath, that was gathering thick over him; at the sword of justice which was brandished against him; and at the curses of the righteous law, which, like thunderbolts of vengeance from heaven, were directed at him. In consideration of these things, our Savior began "*to be very heavy!*"

That which crushed our Savior's very heart and soul was the very thing for which he came into the world — **The prospect of what he must endure as our Substitute.**

Let me say it once more. The message of this blessed Book is Substitution. The Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, our Mediator and Surety died in our place, in the place of God's elect, as our Substitute. By his own blood, when he was made sin for us, when he was slain in our stead, he satisfied the justice of God for us, magnified his holy law, made it honorable, and purchased for us the complete, everlasting forgiveness of all our sins. He died, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Christ died at Calvary so that God might be both just and the Justifier of all who believe. It is written, "**by mercy and truth iniquity is purged**" (Pro. 16:7).

(Romans 3:19-28) "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of

him which believeth in Jesus. 27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

(Ephesians 1:7) “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Since the Lord Jesus Christ died as the sinners’ Substitute, since he has met and fully satisfied the justice of God for us, believing sinners have no reason ever to fear condemnation by God, accusation before God, or separation from God.

(Romans 8:1-4) “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

(Romans 8:31-39) “**What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be against us*?** 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 **Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth.** 34 **Who is he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.** 35 **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?** 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Do you see this? Since Christ died for me I cannot die. If you are in Christ, for you there is no possibility...

- Of Condemnation!
- Of Accusation!
- Of Separation!

It was the enormous load of my sin and my guilt which crushed my Savior’s heart in Gethsemane!

(Isaiah 53:4-6) “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

SIN'S IGNOMINY

What a horrible, monstrous, ignominious thing sin must be! Nothing so displays the exceeding sinfulness of sin as the death of our Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary.

When the holy Lord God found sin on his own darling Son...

- He killed him!
- He poured out all the unmitigated fury of his wrath upon him!
- He forsook him!

If God finds sin on you, he will do the same thing to you forever! Let us never look lightly upon sin.

CHRIST'S PRAYER

What is the meaning of our Lord's prayer in 42?

(Luke 22:42) "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

In his time of great heaviness, sorrow and distress, we find our Lord Jesus in prayer. What an example he sets before us. The first one to whom we should turn in every time of trouble is our heavenly Father. Our Gods should be the first to hear the words of our complaints. He may or may not relieve our trouble; but it is good for our souls for us to unburden our hearts at the throne of grace. There, and only there, will we discover the all-sufficiency of his grace.

(Hebrews 4:16) "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

(James 5:13) "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray."

But what was our Lord praying for in the garden of Gethsemane? Let us never rush in where angels dare not tread. I will not entertain idle curiosity about the things of God, especially when discussing the heart-wrenching agony of soul endured by the Son of God to save us. Still, this agony of soul which the Lord Jesus endured for us is recorded in all four Gospel narratives. **Matthew and Mark** both tell us that our Savior uttered this prayer, in much the same words three times. **Luke** adds the details about his bloody sweat and an angel coming to minister to him.

(Matthew 26:39-42) "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*. 40 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak. 42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."

(Luke 22:41-44) “And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, *42* Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. *43* And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. *44* And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

While the apostle John does not specifically deal with our Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane, he does give us a hint at the meaning of his prayer. In John 12, we see our Savior in a similar position and experience six days before the betrayal in Gethsemane (John 12:23-33).

Here we see our Savior in great agony of soul. His agony was clearly related to his death at Calvary. Yet, he set his face steadfastly toward the cross without flinching. Read that passage in John 12 with me.

(John 12:23-33) “And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. *24* Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. *25* He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. *26* If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour. *27* Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. *28* Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, *saying*, I have both glorified *it*, and will glorify *it* again. *29* The people therefore, that stood by, and heard *it*, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. *30* Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. *31* Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. *32* And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. *33* This he said, signifying what death he should die.”

While he certainly has his death at Calvary in mind, our Lord Jesus, obviously, was not asking that he might be kept from that appointment for which he came into this world. He had come to this place on purpose, that he might be betrayed by Judas, arrested, and hanged upon the cursed tree by the hands of wicked men, to fulfil the will of his Father as our covenant Surety (Heb. 10:1-10).

(Hebrews 10:1-10) “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. *2* For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. *3* But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. *4* For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. *5* Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: *6* In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure. *7* Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. *8* Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and *offering* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure *therein*;

which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.”

If the Lord Jesus was not praying to be saved from dying in our place as our sin-atonement Substitute, what was he praying for his Father to do here?

Our Lord was here once more under the assault of hell. Satan was making his last effort to keep him from fulfilling his Father’s purpose of grace in redemption. He was doing everything he could to keep the Seed of the woman from crushing his head.

I have no doubt at all that our Savior, being overwhelmed with the prospect of being made sin, in this state of soul agony, was as a man fearful of dying before he had finished his work, before he reached the cross. He was fearful of dying in the garden of Gethsemane (Heb. 5:7).

(Hebrews 5:7) “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.”

We must never forget that our Lord Jesus is both God and man in one glorious person. As God he could never know fear. Yet, he could not be a man tempted in all points like as we are if he did not know fear.

These two, distinct natures in Christ, the divine and the human, are obvious throughout the Gospel narratives, especially in those passages dealing with his temptations, sufferings, and death. Here in Gethsemane, we see the man Christ Jesus begging for relief from this great trial of agony. Yet, his submission and resignation to the Father’s will is submission and resignation to his own will as God.

“***The hour***” from which our Lord prayed for release was not the hour for which he had come into the world, but this hour in the Garden. “***The cup***” which he prayed might pass from him was not the cup of his Father’s wrath. That cup Jehovah’s servant took with determinate purpose and resolve. The cup he wanted to pass from him was the fear of dying in the Garden before he could take the cup of his Father’s wrath and drink it for us. Let me see if I can illustrate this for you.

Illustration: A pure, chaste virgin about to be thrown into a prison with base murderers and rapists, to be violated by them as they pleased, might well be crushed to death in her heart in fear of the horror she is about to endure.

OUR LORD’S EXAMPLE

What a remarkable example our Lord Jesus set before us of submission to the will of God. — “*Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done*” (v. 42).

(1 Peter 2:21-24) “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

This is the highest measure of practical godliness and holiness. Let men brag and boast to themselves as they may about their imaginary *godly* deeds. **The surrender of my will to God’s will in all things is godliness...**

- To Bear Patiently Whatever My Father Sends.
- To Desire Only What God Has Purposed.
- To Want Nothing But What God Wills.
- To Prefer Pain To Pleasure, If That Is My Father’s Will.
- To Willingly Be As Passive Before God As Wet Clay In The Potter’s Hands.

Nothing can make us happier in this world than submission to the will of God. Nothing brings us so much heartache and misery in this world as having our own way. May God give us grace to willingly submit to his will.

- His Eternal Will Of Predestination.
- His Revealed Will In Scripture.
- His Accomplished Will In Providence

Illustration: *Eli - “It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.”*

OUR SHAME

What shameful, fickle, slothful, sinful creatures the very best of God’s saints are in this world (vv. 45-46). We have a painful illustration of this fact in the slothful indifference of Peter, James, and John.

(Luke 22:45-46) “And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, (46) And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

But we have an even more painful illustration of it in ourselves. **We all far too often...**

- Sleep when we ought to pray.
- Ignore our Lord when he is near.
- Quickly let slip those things we ought to hold fast.

We who are born of God, so long as we live in this world, are people with two diametrically opposite, warring natures (Rom. 7:14-23; Gal. 5:17; Ps. 73).

- The spirit is ready and willing.
- But the flesh is sinful and weak.

Therefore we must ever watch and pray. We must always be on guard, as soldiers in hostile, enemy territory, knowing that there is a malicious traitor within. We must fight the battles daily. We must wage warfare against our flesh daily. Our rest is yet to come.

(1 Thessalonians 5:14-24) “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all *men*. *15* See that none render evil for evil unto any *man*; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all *men*. *16* Rejoice evermore. *17* Pray without ceasing. *18* In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. *19* Quench not the Spirit. *20* Despise not prophesyings. *21* Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. *22* Abstain from all appearance of evil. *23* And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. *24* Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.”

GIVE THANKS

Turn back to Mark’s account (Mark 14:41-42), and let me remind you what great reason we have to give thanks to our dear Savior for his steadfast resolve as our Surety.

“*And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest.*” — **It is done - this trial is over I have finished the work of my obedience.**

“*The hour is come.*” — **Now the appointed hour of my death, the appointed hour of your redemption is come. Now I must finish the work my Father gave me to do for you. I must go yonder to die in your place!**

“*Behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.*” — **Nothing could keep our Savior from Calvary.** Nothing could keep him from dying for us. Nothing could prevent him from accomplishing that death at Jerusalem for which he had come into this world. And, blessed be his name, nothing can keep him from saving those whom he redeemed with his own precious blood at Calvary!

Did you catch those last three words in verse 41? — “*It is enough!*” — “*Sleep on now, take your rest* — **IT IS ENOUGH!**”

- His obedience is enough.
- His blood is enough.
- His grace is enough.
- He is enough.

Amen.