

FINAL PREPARING FOR CALVARY

Luke 22: 39-53 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Passion Week, but the passage of scripture I feel drawn by the Lord to focus on is an event on Thursday evening. Jesus and His disciples had just finished celebrating their last Supper together before His crucifixion. The Passover celebration with the institution of the Lord's Supper, with Jesus announcing He would be betrayed that night—from Jesus washing His disciples' feet to Judas Iscariot betraying Him with a kiss—all these events take us from the most horrible, heinous moments to the most holy moments of Jesus' earthly life. In the turbulence of these heinous moments mixed with holy moments, Jesus made His final preparations on the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemane to go to Calvary, to lay down His life as a perfect sacrifice for our sin--as the full atonement for our sin. Now the agony of Gethsemane, before the agony of Calvary began. It was the emotional cup of agony Jesus first had to drink in preparation for Calvary. The agony paid emotionally by our Lord in Gethsemane was His final preparation for the physical agony He would soon endure. Following Gethsemane, the slapping of Jesus' face, the buffeting by the soldier's fists, His beard being plucked out, His face being smitten and more marred than that of any man, His head being imbedded with a crown of cruel thorns—all of this and so much more, was for you and me because we are sinners.

That night was already marred by the announcement of the betrayal of Jesus when Jesus led His disciples down through the Kidron Valley over to a place on the Mt. of Olives that Mark 14: 32 calls Gethsemane. On the way, Jesus taught His disciples and had their attention as He taught them in John 14-17 of Heaven, of having peace with God, of surrender to the Lord, of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and before entering the garden, Jesus prayed His wonderful, powerful prayer—His high priestly prayer in John 17. As they walked along, Jesus and His disciples took this final trip to His favorite spot to pray—Gethsemane. What happened when Jesus and His disciples arrived at the Mt. of Olives, at the Garden of Gethsemane? Remember, the events of this night were in darkness, starting with evening/sunset as Mark 14: 17 makes it clear. Going past all the teaching along the road from the large upper room to the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus did eternal business with His Father on behalf of you and me. Be certain what happened in Gethsemane mirrors for us all what often happens in our own lives when heinous temptation comes to try to weaken us, to frighten us and to ruin us as we seek to live holy lives for God. What lessons can we learn from our Lord Jesus as we watch with Him for the next few moments together, remembering Gethsemane?

JESUS KNEW WHERE TO GO TO PREPARE TO FACE THE PRESSURE OF CALVARY COMING SOON. DO WE KNOW WHERE TO GO TO PREPARE FOR OUR GREATEST BATTLES? (I.) Notice Luke 22: 39. “And He came out and

went, as was His custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him.” There are at least three famous sites that today are called the original Garden of Gethsemane. We will never know this side of heaven which of these sites Jesus went to, but He knew which of these sites or even another site where the original Garden of Gethsemane was located. Here, with special permission from the owner Jesus may well have known, there was probably a gate outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem. Gethsemane was doubtless a small garden of olive trees where Jesus loved to go to pray. We read here in v. 39, “as was His custom, and the disciples knew the place well, for His place was their place of prayer too. Judas knew this secret place. Jesus had a place to go to prepare for battle, a place to focus on what was ahead—a place to get Himself ready for Calvary ahead, that was looming within only a few short hours—less than 12 hours away. Jesus needed this secret place, this prayer closet, this war room, this spot which carried with it all the sacredness of preparing for other battles. It was a place of refuge for Jesus, a place of solitude from the pressing crowds, a place for private moments alone with His Father, a place for communion with His Father, a place which was a sanctuary from His enemies, a place for refreshment after long days of ministry, and a place where Jesus’ disciples could get alone with Him to talk.

Do we have a place like that that has become our place, our secret place to go to our knees, to find God’s anointing, to seek His pleasure, and to prepare for our next battles? Gethsemane is the Aramaic word for olive press. This garden where olive trees grew, was where those olives were picked, placed in an ancient press and the precious extra virgin olive oil was extracted from the olives under intense pressure. The pressure Jesus faced in Gethsemane was no less emotionally for Jesus than the pressure needed to crush olives. Once inside the garden, Jesus left eight of His disciples to go on deeper into the garden with Peter, James and John. In this secret garden, Jesus had three most intimate companions, as Moses had two men to hold up his arms—Aaron and Hur. Beloved, God still uses special people in our lives to help us go through some of the most heinous battles of our soul. Do you have a place to get ready for battle with the enemy? Do you have a few close intimate friends who are not yes men or women, cliques full of prejudices? Do you have honest men or women who will speak the truth to you in your Gethsemanes? Where for you is the secret of His presence? There is an old hymn I love called “In the Secret of His Presence.” It was written by a remarkable woman named Ellen Lakshmi Goreh. Ellen was a high-caste Brahmin native of India, the daughter of a Christian convert, and she too was born again. Her mother died when she was in infancy, and Ellen eventually joined the family of a pastor named W. T. Storrs going to England to live with this pastor and his wife. When she was 27, Ellen Goreh returned to India to serve the Lord. In 1880, she wrote as famous hymn. She had had her own Gethsemanes where she had learned how to prepare for the pressures of living for the Lord. She wrote, “In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide! Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesus’ side! Earthly cares can

never vex me, neither trials lay me low; For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go, To the secret place I go. When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of His wing There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal spring; And my Savior rests beside me, as we hold communion sweet: If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet, What He says when thus we meet. Only this I know: I tell Him all my doubts, my griefs and fears; Oh, how patiently He listens! and my drooping soul He cheers: do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false Friend He would be, If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see, Of the sins which He must see. Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord? Go and hide beneath His shadow: this shall then be your reward; And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting place, You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face, Of the Master in your face." My Lord knew where to go to prepare to face the pressure of Calvary coming soon. Do we, do you know where to go to prepare to face your greatest battles? Secondly,

JESUS KNEW WHAT TO DO TO PREPARE TO FACE CALVARY. DO WE KNOW WHAT TO DO TO PREPARE TO FACE OUR TRIALS? (II.) Notice

Luke 22: 40-44. "And when He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done." And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." On this night, our Lord entered the olive press and the sweetest oil of grace and submission to His Father was extracted from the Lord's life as He sweat great drops of blood. God sometimes puts us as His people into situations with pressures, both emotional and physical beyond our imagination. Mark 14: 33-34 describes the internal pressure Jesus felt, "And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed—struck with the terror for what was ahead and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death: remain here and watch." To face in Gethsemane, more than the anguish of Calvary's physical horror, but to face the weight of all our sin, and to face the hell we all deserve—was the greatest oil press in history. The heaviness of the weight upon Jesus was unto death as it took an angel from heaven to come to strengthen Him so He could go on to Calvary. It is possible to die from anguish alone.

Jesus also faced external pressures as he knew what to do and did it. He prayed to His Father, sweating great drops of blood. The clinical term is hematohidrosis. It is extremely rare, but the external pressure was immense. It can kill you. What happened medically is that – "Around the sweat glands, there are multiple blood vessels in a net-like form. Under severe pressure of great stress, those vessels constrict. Then as the

anxiety passes, "the blood vessels dilate to the point of rupture. The blood goes into the sweat glands. As the sweat glands are producing a lot of sweat, the sweat pushes the blood to the surface - coming out as droplets of blood mixed with sweat. Jesus knew what to do with the internal and external pressures—He prayed earnestly to His Father saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but yours, be done."

But the picture is clear from verse 53 that the pressure in Gethsemane was not just internal and external, but it was as many agree, infernal. Jesus faced a temptation here in the Garden even greater than in the wilderness after His 40 day fast. We read in v. 53—"But this is your hour, and the power of darkness." Satan tried to overload Jesus to cause Him to die before He would go to Calvary—as Jesus had prophesied His coming crucifixion often. Often we here folk say that all hell rejoiced when Jesus died on the cross, but Satan knew Genesis 3: 15. He knew Calvary was Jesus reason for coming to earth—He often said He came to die and give His life a ransom for many. Satan often tried to pre-empt the cross—God's ultimate goal to pay for our sins. Satan tried to stop God's plan in the Garden of Eden, when Cain killed Abel, by corrupting the bloodline from which Messiah Jesus would come, by getting King Herod to try to kill Jesus before He would grow to manhood to die for us. In the wilderness temptations, Satan tried to get Jesus to take His crown now and bypass the cross. It would appear that Satan's final infernal pressure on Jesus was His attempt to kill Him in the Garden of Gethsemane through the unbearable pressure. But beloved, never forget it, Jesus was victorious in Gethsemane. He overcame the hour of Satan and the powers of darkness, so that He might still go on to the cross to die for our sins.

What kind of prayer was this that allowed Jesus to pray through? Jesus told His disciples to pray that they would not enter into temptation—v. 40. The devil's temptation was not only faced by Jesus, but by the disciples who wanted to stay awake, but they could not watch. In Mark 14: 32, Jesus said to Peter, James and John, "Remain here and watch—literally "give strict attention to praying for Me." They were not only to pray with Jesus, but for Jesus. Jesus addressed His prayer to His Father—Abba, our word for Daddy. There could be no more intimate prayer. It was a Jewish word Jewish children called their father in the home, but Jews would never dream of using it with God. Jesus could, and in our Gethsemanes, so can we. Paul said in Romans 8:15, "But you did not receive the spirit of bondage or slavery to fall back into fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba! Father!" Mark 14: 36 becomes heart-breaking as Jesus cried out to His Father, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You want." Listen as your child says, "Daddy, you can do anything. Save me from this terrible death." I see in Jesus' prayer that God has given you and me an example that we can use in our own Gethsemanes as we cry out, "You can do

anything, Abba, Daddy. Please stop this horrible Gethsemane for me, but not because I am begging you, but because it is Your will.”

I don't know everything about Jesus' prayer. But we all know that He was born to go to the cross for us. John 18:37. He was the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,”-- Rev. 13:8. Jesus told the Pharisees, “I lay down my life, that I may take it up again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father,” John 10:17-18. Was Jesus asking the Father if He could accomplish salvation another way besides the cross? I am not sure, but I don't think so. He knew His purpose. Jesus was at the point of death in the Garden of Gethsemane. Too often we forget this. Is it not possible that He was praying to live so that He could go on to the cross and fulfill His purpose? He did not want to die here—not in Gethsemane facing the pressure and agony coming. He wanted to finish the task He had been given by the Father to do. As I have meditated on this prayer afresh, I have been praying—“Lord, you know the pressures I face in my Gethsemanes. Send Your angel to save me from death now, so I can go on to fulfill the dying to self and sin that you have ahead for me as I am crucified with You.” Do you know what to do to as you face the emotional agony of your Gethsemanes? Do you go get alone in your secret place? Do you talk to Your Abba in heaven? Do you beg Him as Hezekiah not to let you die prematurely, but to let you face the battles with His help—and fulfill the purposes for which He created you? Thirdly,

JESUS KNEW WHEN TO RISE FROM PRAYER TO FACE CALVARY IN SPITE OF BEING ALONE. DO WE KNOW WHEN TO RISE TO FACE OUR TRIALS WHEN WE ARE ALONE? (III.) Notice Luke 22: 45-46. “And when He

rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, and He said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” There comes a time when we have to quit sleeping for sorrow and rise to meet the enemy. We must face the fight. We know the battle must be fought. We must go out prepared to meet the enemy in the strength of the Lord. Prayer gets us ready for the fight. I hear God saying to many of us in our marriages, in our families, in our churches, and in our individual battles, “Rise and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.” Now praying was not on Jesus' knees, nor can prayer always be on our knees. There's a time to get up, rise, put on the whole armor including prayer (Ephesians 6: 10-19) and go out to face the enemy. Jesus did and He fulfilled His mission at Calvary, living through the long dark night of His besieged soul. Satan didn't kill Him in the Garden and abort God's plan. When Jesus said to His disciples, “Rise,” the battle of preparation for Calvary was complete for Jesus. Jesus would drink the entire bitter cup of shame for us—The cup given Him by His father, would He not drink it? He knew He would, that He must. Fourthly, lastly,

JESUS KNEW HOW TO FACE HIS BETRAYER AND CALVARY WITH DIVINE PRIORITIES. DO WE KNOW HOW TO FACE OUR BETRAYERS PLANS TO DESTROY US WITH DIVINE PRIORITIES? (IV.)

Notice with me Luke 22: 47-53. While He was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss Him, but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” (We can be disciples of Jesus just like Judas and betray Jesus or His followers or leaders with flattery, a smile or a kiss) And when those who were around Him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?” And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And He touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against Him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.” Mark 14: 49-52 adds, “But let the scriptures be fulfilled. And they all left Him and fled. And a young man followed Him with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left them and ran away naked.” What a night it was for Jesus’ disciples who were not prayed up. They were unprepared for temptation, betraying Him, sleeping for sorrow, fighting with a sword, fleeing and soon Peter was denying Jesus. Jesus was about to become sin on the cross, 2 Cor. 5:21. For the first time in eternity, He was to be separated from His Father, Mark 15:34—another part of His cup that was unthinkable. He was to be forsaken, abandoned and judged by His eternal Abba. Drinking that bitterest cup was overwhelming to the heart and mind of the sinless Son of God! That cup represented all the wrath and hatred of God against sin forever. That cup symbolized the full, undiluted wrath of God about to be poured out on Jesus. With that priority, He took time to put an ear back on the servant of the high priest, Malchus. He took time to tell his disciples to put up their swords. He took time to rebuke the chief priests, officers and elders of the temple saying, “Why did you come in the dark to do this? You could have arrested Me in the temple. But go ahead, it’s your big hour, you and the power of darkness.” Jesus was prepared with right priorities, to drink the bitter cup given Him by His Father.

After the worst Satan could throw at Jesus in Garden—as in the wilderness, there were three incidents, here Jesus prayed three times. After that Satanic oppression, Jesus won the battle and pressure by humble submission to His Father. Whose example will we follow? It’s the enemy’s hour again in America. Will we opt for sleeping, then waking and taking up swords and guns? Does God need our guns flashing or does He need us to accept whose hour it is so we can be prepared for every battle ahead—prepared to submit to His will? Will we opt for bloody ears on the ground or finding our power in prayer, first on our knees, and then praying as we stand up for Jesus? I

call us church to our secret place, to pray, to rise, and to fight as Jesus did. We must not fight our battles by running away or taking the sword or leaving the side of those counting on us most. Never! We fight our battles with Christ's priorities by doing what Jesus did. We live in surrender to His will—not in flight, not in fighting, not in rejecting our ministries, but in fulfilling them for His glory. May we fulfill His ministries. Only by praying through our Gethsemanes can we stop saying, "I will not put up with this a moment longer." No! In Gethsemane, we learn to accept the cup the Father gives us. When we do, victory is just ahead! I love you. Amen.