

Christ's Twofold Estate

Lesson 5: Christ's Agonizing Prayer, Lk 22.41-44

As the hour of Christ's death approaches, He gives Himself to three preparative acts: 1) He commends His children by prayer to His Father (Jn 17), 2) He institutes a memorial of His death to serve as a means of grace in His absence, 3) He commends Himself by prayer to the Father. In this third act, we can observe three parts: 1) Christ's prayer, 2) Christ's agony, 3) Christ's relief.

Doctrine: *Christ was praying to His Father in an extraordinary agony when they came to arrest Him.*

I. The *place* of Christ's prayer

- A. He was in Gethsemane, a garden which stood across from the sheep gate on the other side of the Brook Kidron.
 1. The sheep gate took its name from the multitude of sheep that were driven through it for sacrifice at the temple.
 2. Kidron is the brook King David crossed in his sufferings and the brook into which the good Kings of Judah cast all the altars and ashes of the idols which they purged from the Temple of the Lord, 1Kgs 15.13; 2Kgs 23.12; 2Chr 29.16.
 3. Kidron was essentially the brook which washed away the filth and uncleanness of Jerusalem and it caused the waters to have a black tincture.
- B. When Christ walked to the garden, He crossed this brook (Jn 18.1)—the dark waters serving as a fit emblem of the sufferings awaiting Him. —According to Ps 110.5-7, Christ would drink of this brook in the context of judgment and *therefore* lift up His head. Why?
- C. When they arrested Christ, they led Him back over this brook and through the sheep gate, as a sheep led to the slaughter.
- D. Christ didn't enter the garden to hide. He knew Judas would know He was there (Jn 18.2). Rather, Christ chose the garden as the place in which He would offer Himself as our substitute. In the garden Adam succumbed to temptation and surrendered to the devil, in the garden Christ will overcome temptation and submit to the Father.
- E. In the garden, Christ uses His final hours to commend Himself to the Father in prayer.

II. The *contents* of Christ's prayer

- A. Christ wrestled over the drinking of the cup of God's wrath, v.42. This cup contained the most bitter sufferings ever to be mixed and more wrath than any creature had ever tasted.
- B. When He prayed for this cup to pass from Him, He was speaking of the horrid and dreadful wrath that He foresaw in the cross and asking that, if possible, He might not have to drink it.
 1. Was Christ regretting His engagement? Did He forget that the whole reason He came into the world was to deal with sin by suffering for it (Heb 10.5-7)? No. We mustn't understand His struggle in this way. So how do we understand this prayer and struggle of Christ?
 - a) First, we must distinguish between absolute and conditional prayer. Christ's prayer is a conditional prayer submissively offered to the Father. "If possible...; nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done."
 - b) Secondly, we must distinguish between the natures according to which Christ acted. Having two distinct natures, He had two distinct wills. The life of Christ was a mixture of power and weakness, divine glory and human frailty. As a man He feared and shunned death, but as the God-man He willingly submitted to it. His prayer is a testament to the full humanity of His human nature; but His overcoming resolve is a testament to the full deity of His divine nature. As a man He shunned divine wrath

and a cursed death, but as our divine Mediator He resolved to drink the cup of God's wrath (Isa 63.3) and become a curse for us (Gal 3.13), cf. Jn 18.10-11

- c) There was nothing sinful in His request. In fact, there was good in it because it was a part of His satisfaction for our sin in that it showed that He suffered in His soul as well as in His body.

C. The *manner* of Christ's prayer

1. It was a solitary prayer. This is a winepress He must tread alone. He is the Father's firstborn and only Lamb and the full weight on our sin must be placed upon Him alone, Jn 1.36; Rev 5.6-10; Isa 63.6
2. It was a humble prayer. He kneels. He prostrates Himself on His face. He creeps in the very dust. His heart is as low as His body.
3. It was a repeated prayer. Christ returns to find some comfort in His disciples, but their sleepiness only increases His burden, Mt 26.40. He goes back to the Father and asks the same thing again. And then again. But when it becomes clear that it must be so, He sweetly falls in with His Father's will, bringing His human heart and will to the condition of His mission. He came to save His people from death by death. And so to death He submits.
4. It was an agonizing prayer, Mt 26.38; Mk 14.33; Lk 22.44; Jn 12.27; Isa 33.14; cf. Nah 1.2-9
 - a) Not a hand lay on Him, and yet He was in such inner/soul turmoil that blood poured from His body like sweat under the weight of fear and grief.
 - b) If deity had not upheld Him, He would not have survived it. And yet, He *was* upheld, because our salvation depended on Him not *anticipating* it, but *bearing* it, and seeing the work through until it was *finished* and our whole condemnation, curse, and death were completely swallowed up and *overcome*, Jn 19.30; Rom 8.1; 1Cor 15.55-57

Inferences

- I. Prayer is a great relief under the greatest troubles. The best posture for wrestling with affliction is upon our knees. When danger is near, it's good to draw near to God, Ps 22.11. Grievances are eased by groans. It's relieving to cry to men, but our deliverance and the strength to endure comes from crying to God.
- II. We shouldn't be discouraged when no answer comes to our prayers. If God denies us an answer, we should take comfort in that He's dealing with us as He dealt with our Lord, Ps 22.2-3.
 - A. The cup didn't pass from Christ, but He was upheld and enabled to drink it. Hence in the day of trouble God may answer us with deliverance from or with grace through it. Either way, if it's our will that the Father's will be done, then we'll always get what we pray for, and in every answer we'll have cause for praise.
 - B. Answers to prayer should never be judged by sense, according to what we see and feel, but always by faith, assured that we've been heard (for Christ's sake) and assured that the answer we need will be given to us.
 - C. Also, remember that delays are not denials. God's timing is perfect. Early answers can't properly be appreciated by us, and late answers can't properly stand with God's faithfulness. He is always on time.
- III. How much should we love our Lord Jesus! See Him prostrate in the garden drenched in His own blood under the grief and agony of the coming cross. See how greatly He suffered on our account!
 - A. He suffered for us more than any creature could or did. Let Him have from our hearts more love and worship and obedience than any creature ever could or will have.