

THE STORY of THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST
Lesson 6
Matthew 26.36-46
JESUS' AGONY AND PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE

When Jesus left the upper room with His disciples after they had eaten the Passover Supper together, He knew where He was going.

He knew that Judas was out there already...and He knew what Judas had gone to do.
As He had repeatedly reminded His disciples, HIS HOUR HAD NOW COME.

And, before His Hour would be an Hour of Death, it must first be
an HOUR OF INTENSE, EXCRUCIATING SUFFERING.

The physical, spiritual, and emotional suffering would begin in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane.

As we follow the Lord Jesus through His agonies in the Garden of Gethsemane,
we need to keep a couple Scriptures in mind.

Lamentations 1.12. Jeremiah wrote this personal entry in his own journal of agonies (***Lamentations***) as he mourned over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?

**Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
which the LORD has inflicted on me in the day of His fierce anger.**

We are going to witness that THIS was the most painful of all of Jesus' agonies...
and for sure, the one He most feared.

Hebrews 5.7-9. Jesus Christ was the perfect, Divine Son of God -- God, the Son.
Yet He was also perfectly human in every aspect...with the exception that HE HAD NO SIN...
HE KNEW NO SIN...HE DID NO SIN.

Yet, His Priesthood for our salvation required that HE MUST SUFFER IN EVERY WAY WE SUFFER
...and LEARN OBEDIENCE.

**...Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications,
with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death,
and was heard because of His godly fear,
though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.
And having been perfected, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.**

He LEARNED OBEDIENCE -- not by improving out of disobedience or imperfection --
but He LEARNED OBEDIENCE by PERFECTLY PRACTICING OBEDIENCE
IN EVERY DECISION, MOVEMENT, AND ACTIVITY OF HIS LIFE.

And, that required BEING OBEDIENT EVEN TO THE POINT OF DYING.

John 10.18; Philippians 2.8

He made His final commitment to OBEY HIS FATHER during His agonizing prayers in Gethsemane.

So, as He left the upper room with His disciples, HE KNEW HE MUST GO TO PRAY.
He had always prayed without ceasing...just as His normal life of fellowship with His Father.
And, He had always prayed especially before critical decisions and significant cruxes in
His life's ministry (e.g., His baptism, choosing the 12 apostles, His transfiguration, et al).
AND THIS WAS ***THE EVENT*** FOR WHICH HE HAD COME INTO THE WORLD.

He must seek and obtain the necessary strength, resolve, and commitment
FROM PRAYING TO HIS FATHER.

Matthew 26.30: And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Verse 36: Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples,
“Sit here WHILE I GO AND PRAY over there.”

It had been a very hectic, tense, and taxing week...all week long.

This day had been a most physically tiring and emotionally draining day.

They were all already exhausted. **Matthew 26.43**

But JESUS KNEW THAT HIS MOST IMPORTANT BUSINESS AT HAND WAS TO PRAY.

How so very much **unlike** us.

If given the choice between PRAYING and DOING SOMETHING PHYSICAL,
we are sure we will accomplish so much more **by the activity** than **by the praying**.

WHICH OF US (us versus the Lord Jesus) DO YOU THINK IS WISER?

WHICH OF US DO YOU THINK IS FOOLISH?

The Lord Jesus picked this place to pray on purpose.

Luke 22.39: Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, AS HE WAS ACCUSTOMED,
and His disciples also followed Him.

John 18.1-2: When Jesus had spoken these words, He went out with His disciples
over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered.
And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples.

GETHSEMANE means “olive press.” There was a grove of olive trees there, and most probably a press which was used to crush the olives and extract the oil. Since this was a customary meeting place for Jesus and His disciples when they were in Jerusalem, we have every reason to believe that the owner of this garden was a friend of Jesus’, and probably also a believer.

And, Jesus’ soul is going to be crushed here this night.

It probably also had a rock wall around it with a single entrance.

Jesus left 8 of the disciples there at the gate and took Peter, James, and John with Him into the Garden.

Matthew 26.37-38: And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee (James and John, *Mark 14.33*), and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed.

Something had dramatically changed about Jesus’ demeanor and His entire outer disposition.

The disciples could tell that something very unusual and extraordinary was going on.

But, as yet, they didn’t realize how serious the moment was.

He had exhibited this disposition before.

And, it had begun to bother them and intimidate them at that time also.

This was on their way to Jerusalem this last time. It had been several days ago...

but they probably didn’t put the two events together...yet. **See Mark 10.32-34.**

But, Jesus is very preoccupied and focused on THE CROSS He must bear tomorrow.

He must get His soul strengthened and readied.

Matthew 26.38: Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

He not only asked them to stay awake and watch for the approach of Judas and the temple guard, but **He also warned them** against succumbing to their own physical and spiritual weaknesses.

Luke 22.40: When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

They were oblivious to their own weaknesses and their deep need to draw strength from the Lord Jesus.

TEMPTATION is any opportunity to disobey and displease our Heavenly Father... and do anything that is contrary to His desires.

We are TEMPTED when we are enticed and drawn away from Christ by our own desires...and choose to give in to them and follow them instead of following Christ in loving obedience. **James 1.14.**

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” is the means God has given us by which we must be strong and victorious in our spiritual warfare and defeat the assaults of the Enemy against us. **Ephesians 6.18**

And then, Jesus Himself went a little further into the Garden enclosure (**Luke 22.41:** ...about a stone’s cast), and He knelt down, and prayed. He is going to repeat this agonizing exercise three times.

Matthew 26.44: So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Now, let’s listen to what He prays. This is the crux of our lesson.

Matthew 26.39: He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying,
“O My Father, if it is possible, LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME;
nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.”

The physical pain and agonies of what He is going to experience is not the thing that Jesus feared and dreaded most. He certainly was not looking forward to the physical pains and sufferings of the scourging, the beatings, and finally, the awful death of crucifixion.

BUT, THAT ALONE IS NOT WHAT HE FEARED MOST.

In fact, it was Jesus who taught us NOT TO FEAR physical pains, afflictions, and sufferings.

Matthew 10.28: And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Luke 12.4: And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

The Lord Jesus had been telling His disciples for months before this time that He was going to encounter these sufferings...and be killed in this barbaric manner. E.g. **Matthew 16.21**

He was not waffling or second-guessing **whether** He was willing to die on the cross.

That matter had been settled long ago.

Even back in **John 12.27**, during the Passover festivities, Jesus had said: **Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? “Father, save Me from this hour”? But for this purpose I came to this hour.**

He wasn’t even considering turning back...and not going through with His crucifixion for us.

But, there is something more here that is traumatizing Jesus’ soul.

It was **THE CUP** which the Father had given Him to drink...and what was in **THE CUP**.

THE CUP was more than the physical pains of the cross and His death on the cross.

THE CUP was the outpouring of God's holy and Divine wrath upon Him.

This **CUP** is what He was praying to His Father that **"if it is possible, let THIS pass from Me without My having to drink it."**

Matthew 26.42: Again a second time He went away, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if **THIS CUP** cannot pass away, unless I drink it, Your will be done."

Verse 44: So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

The **"cup"** was a familiar Old Testament symbol and figure of speech to represent the outpouring of God's wrath...and being literally immersed in God's angry terrors.

Isaiah 51.17; Jeremiah 25.15, 16; Lamentations 4.21, 21; Ezekiel 23.31-34; Habakkuk 2.16
(And also in **Revelation 14.10; 16.19; 17.4; 18.6**)

THIS CUP is what Jesus was going to have to bear IN THE PLACE OF HIS PEOPLE...
AS OUR SUBSTITUTE...AS OUR PASSOVER LAMB so God's wrath, anger, indignation, and His unbearable punishment against our sins COULD PASS OVER US.

Because this is what the cross is all about. This is what is going to be transacted on the cross.

Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb of God, sinless Son of God who had become a perfectly obedient Man was going to take upon Himself the personal responsibility and accountability for ALL THE SINS OF GOD'S PEOPLE -- both in Old Testament times and in New Testament days -- and BE PUNISHED FOR THEM AS IF HE HAD COMMITTED THEM HIMSELF.

2 Corinthians 5.21; 1 Peter 2.24; Galatians 3.13

In some way we cannot comprehend or fully understand,
GOD WAS GOING TO TURN HIS FACE OF LOVE AND FAVOR AWAY FROM HIS DARLING SON during those hours He was becoming sin for us. **Isaiah 53.1-12**

We have no idea how deeply God hates sin...and how repulsive and abhorrent sin is to Him.

But, here you can catch just a glimpse into God's soul...and begin to estimate ever so slightly how God abominates our sins -- that He was willing to put away His own Son from His Face during those hours He was on the cross BEARING OUR SINS UPON HIMSELF.

THIS WAS THE CUP THAT JESUS DREADED WITH ALL THE POWER OF HIS SOUL... and prayed so desperately three times -- that if it was possible -- if there was any way at all that He could still die as our Sacrifice for sins...and be God's Appointed Passover Lamb without having to suffer disfavor and estrangement from His Beloved Father -- that's what He wanted. NEVERTHELESS, WHATEVER THE FATHER ULTIMATELY WANTED..that's what He would do. **AND, AS HE GRAPPLED WITH THE CONFLICT, HIS RESOLVE TO OBEY WAS ONLY STRENGTHENED.**

Jesus always submitted and surrendered Himself to whatever the Father wanted for Him. **John 8.29**

But not before He was so immersed in agonies and traumas -- spiritual, emotional, and physical -- that **His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.** **Luke 22.44**

This is a rare, but well-documented phenomenon called *hematidrosis*. It occurs when someone comes under such extreme emotional stress, that the capillaries under the skin burst from the pressure placed upon them by the pushing of the blood through the veins -- and the blood mingles with the perspiration and oozes out through the pores of the skin.

OH, HOW HE LOVES YOU AND ME -- OH, HOW HE LOVES YOU AND ME, HE GAVE HIS LIFE...WHAT MORE COULD HE GIVE -- OH, HOW HE LOVES YOU AND ME!