

An Attempt To Listen To God On

Gethsemane

By

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Meditations on Gethsemane

Gethsemane! What impressions it brings to the believer's mind; a cold dark night, a weeping Christ, sleeping disciples, and a traitor in fellowship with satanically blinded and energized men. The record is an invitation to spiritual mysteries and soul-searching which will result in one of two outcomes as it reveals and convicts of personal deadness:

- 1) If this awareness of deadness is maintained then the results of the meditations on Christ will mean increased condemnation.
- 2) If this awareness results the individual to move to higher spiritual ground, then the results will be a deeper wonder of Christ, God and richer worship.

Gethsemane is:

- 1) The portal to Calvary
- 2) A sphere where there must be nothing of fleshly emotionalism or imagination

When the Holy Spirit introduces us to our Lord in any of the Gospels, He does so in a logical manner, consequently, Gethsemane is developed from that which has gone before and introduces that which follows.

The Approach And Background

The pathway to Gethsemane, and ultimately to Calvary, began in eternity past necessitating a series of journeys. The first journey was from Heaven to earth. This was followed by multiple earthly journeys in which He never wandered, but purposefully journeyed in fellowship with His God and Father. Each progression, or stoppage¹ of the journey,² was for a number of reasons, some of which were:

- 1) The manifestation of the glory of God
- 2) The authentication of who He was
- 3) The undoing the works of the evil one
- 4) The blessing of humanity

The six days prior to the crucifixion had been filled with activity. On one occasion He did a work, the like of which He had never done before, or after, during His earthly sojourn. He cursed part of His own creation! This seemed so out of character for Him. It was one of two judgmental expressions at this time, the other being the cleansing of the temple. (Mk. 11:15-17)

It almost seemed a flurry of activity:

- 1) Sending the disciples on two different missions:
 - a) To get the donkey for His ride into Jerusalem
 - b) To prepare the passover
- 2) The cleansing the temple
- 3) Answering the questions of the disciples in the Olivet message

There had been nights alone, and nights in Bethany. A supper had been made for Him in the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus whom he loved, and by whom He was loved. What a delightful oasis of fellowship and genuine warmth of affection their home and company was, especially at this juncture in His life. How starkly it stood out against the envy, spite and hatred He was soon to know.

The time finally came for the last journey prior to His arrest. On one level his darkest hours, and yet, His brightest. Leaving the flickering oil lamps of Bethany, the little band moves amongst the Roman soldiers in their armament and the international Jewish people from throughout the known world. The bazaars were closed as people were en route, or in homes preparing to eat the Passover. In many homes there would be set the empty chair for the Messiah. One would say: "Perhaps next year"; the Hallel would be sung, the lamb eaten, and the

¹ Matt. 20:32; Jn. 7:37

² Lk. 4:43-44; 5:27.

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remembrance of that night so long ago when the Lord brought their fathers out of Egypt. What a deliverance that had been. Now the Lamb of God was walking through Jerusalem's streets. The Great Antitype of all the Passover pointed to was in their midst, by the many unrecognized, unknown, and unwanted. He, who was the Desire of all Nations (Hag. 2:7) was to experience just how deeply His own would not receive Him, and the depth of their not seeing any beauty in Him (Isa. 53:1). It was only a matter of hours before Israel's rejection would reach its zenith and in His being "cut off". (Dan. 9:26; Isa. 53:8)

The first major stop on this last journey was the upper room where solemn and sacred moments would be spent together. Last words would be spoken and last illustrations given. Who could describe, much less comprehend, the emotions that filled His heart and mind as He met with the disciples and Judas?

There is one thing that makes this journey to the upper room so different from the journey to Gethsemane. It is that nothing is recorded of spoken words, indications, thoughts or meditations. The thoughts of the heart and mind of the Lord are treasures that the Father has retained for His own pleasure.

The Sitting Down

There is a beautiful distinction between the records of Matthew and Luke concerning the Lord and the disciples sitting down:

- 1) "He sat down with the twelve", that is, *He* sat with *them*. That is infinite grace. (Matt. 26:20)
- 2) "He sat down and the twelve apostles with Him", that is, *they* sat down with *Him*. That is infinite privilege. (Lk. 22:14)

When the Lord sat down with them, it indicated infinite condescension, but when they sat down with Him, it indicated a glorious honor. Concerning the elders of Israel we read: "And they saw the God of Israel . . . they saw God, and did eat and drink" (Ex. 24:10-11). That was a glorious privilege. When 5000 and 4000 were fed by the Lord and ate before Him, that was a glorious privilege (Matt. 14:21; 16:10). Similarly, when we meet at the holy convocation of the Lord's Supper, we meet the risen Lord, our glorious Host, and we eat and drink in fellowship with Him and in remembrance of Him. This is a profoundly sacred and holy privilege, and yet how easily it can become a mere formality.

The disciples would never forget this place, nor the memories of the last hours together when:

- 1) The Lord kept Passover, which He had earnestly longed to do. (Lk. 22:15)
- 2) He taught the disciples lessons in humility and the pathway to holiness. (Jn. 13-17)
- 3) He gave them the rich teaching of union of His people with Himself. (Jn. 15:1-7)
 - a) Union with Him meant there was to be a love for each other and expected hatred from the world. He assured them that in His absence He would not leave them orphans, but would send the Comforter. They could continue, as they had done so often before, to keep communion with Him by means of prayer. In that upper room the Lord gave one symbol and demonstrated another. (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; ch.16:7)
- 4) He gave the symbol of the Lord's supper saying: "This bread is my body given for you" and "This cup is the new testament in my blood" (Lk. 22:20). He demonstrated by washing the disciples feet, the deeper need for continual cleansing (Jn. 13:5).

In contrast to the loveliness of His thoughtfulness, in that upper room there were two dark sinister elements:

- 1) The self-centeredness of the disciples
- 2) Judas!

One of the effects of sin on man is He thinks primarily of himself, and this was manifested in the upper room. Dark attitudes were seen in that sacred hour when the pride of life erupted from the disciples' hearts, resulting in controversy as to who should be the greatest (Mk. 9:34). This was not the first time the egotistic grasping for personal glory had been manifested (Lk. 9:46). What is amazing is the spewing out of its self-centeredness at the very time Christ showed His exceeding thoughtfulness and humility. In contrast to the disciples, as the hour of

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the greatest conflict and activity of love eternity will ever know drew closer to Him, instead of being filled with personal self pity, or egotistical greatness, He tenderly thought of others and that which lay ahead for them.

The devil, having entered into Judas, and he being driven by greed, went out to fulfill the pledge he had made to the chief priests two days before (Matt. 26:2-4; 14-16). The Holy Spirit, through the Scripture, records: "and it was night". (Jn. 13:30)

It was a wonderful manifestation of grace that the Lord sheltered Judas from the fury, scornful looks and attitudes of the disciples. Therefore, the Lord will not reveal who the betrayer is but will let him show himself. What a beautiful attitude this is, no animosity in the Lord's own heart and He will not promote it in the other disciples. It was not that He did not know about that which Judas was about to do as the following verses show:

- 1) Very possibly, weeks before the crucifixion while in Galilee, the Lord said: "The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men" (Matt. 17:22). Again: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death." In neither case did the Lord mention or even hint as to how or by whom. (Matt. 20:18)
- 2) Two days before the crucifixion, now in Jerusalem, the Lord said: "Ye know that after two days is [the feast of] the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified", but again the Lord does not mention or even hint as to how or by whom. (Matt. 26:2)

It is not until the Jewish day of the crucifixion, at the last possible moment, the Lord said: "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table" and again, He does not say who or whom (Lk. 22:21). Even yet, in the last few moments of the disciples being together, and minutes before Judas went out, the Lord will still hold back, only saying that it is the one to whom He will give the sop.

We sense the tenderness of the Lord's heart when speaking of Judas, when He said: "The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! good were it for that man if he had not been born" (Mk.14:21). How deeply the Lord must have felt for Judas, a man who, for whatever reason, had been ensnared by money, and it was going to cost him his soul in a Christless eternity. Truly the words of the Lord were personified by Judas, and only God knows how many since, when he said: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mk. 8:36). Dark, tragic, wastage of life; living as it were in a sunken submarine and striving to gain all there is in it.

It is impossible not to be impressed by the self control of the Lord not to allow the knowledge of who the betrayer was to effect His relationship with Judas, nor the relationship Judas had with the other disciples.

When the Passover and institution of the supper was over, they sang a hymn. Singing is something we do when we are joyful. It is very hard to sing when facing or experiencing great darkness and grief. Possibly the Lord led His own in the singing. I wonder if He thought of a time yet to come when He would rejoice over His own with singing.

"The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." (Zeph. 3:17)

"I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee." (Heb. 2:12)

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The Lord would have sung this hymn in deep and thoughtful contemplation. With intense personal affirmation, would He have sung the sentiments of the “Hallel of Egypt”³ of Psa. 115-118? It is with astonishment we can listen as He would have sung the words:

“Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: He is their help and their shield.” (Psa. 115:11)

“I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.” (Psa. 116:1-4)

“I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid.” (Psa. 116:14-16)

“I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day, which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.” (Psa. 118:21-28)

Arise And Let Us Go Hence

Profound contemplations! After singing, the Lord says: “Arise, let us go hence,” and they possibly leave the room for the walk to Gethsemane.

With reference to John 14:31, whether the Lord actually left the upper room is an open question. Most writers state that what the Lord really meant was to arise and go to another development of truth, but remaining in the upper room. It has even been suggested that it was a task to get eleven people ready to leave at the same time, so while they were lingering, the Lord kept on speaking. I do not see this as a good exegesis of the words of the Lord.

In the twelve references to the words, “arise” and “go” in the New Testament, never does it indicate a change of doctrine, but rather of movement. The following references make this clear:

- 1) “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house”. (Matt. 9:6)
- 2) “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee”. (Lk. 15:18)
- 3) “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert”. (Acts 8:26)
- 4) “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”. (Acts 9:6)
- 5) “And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for [one] called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth”. (Acts 9:11)
- 6) “Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them”. (Acts 10:20)

³ The word “Hallel” means praise and this Hallel was sung at the passover. The first two Psalms, 113-114, were sung before the supper and Psalms 115-118 afterward. It is different from the “Great Hallel” which is Psalm 136.

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The only time the Lord did not use the word “arise” in a literal sense, was when He said: “Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” (Lk. 24:38). In the passage being discussed a consideration of the Lord’s words and a true exegesis of the scripture will show that it must be taken literally, however, that does not necessitate it happening immediately.

Illustration: When at someones home one might say: “Well it is time to go” and preparations are made, they do not get up at that moment and go but they do go.

My understanding is that the Lord said: “Arise let us be going”, and while still in the room, He gave His last thoughts and prayed with them the glorious prayer of John 17. I cannot see this happening in the open street with the disciples all standing around. I would consider this to be too sacred for an open forum.

The greater question to be faced is why the Lord said it at this time? The immediate context is twofold:

- 1) “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.” (v. 30)
- 2) “I love the Father and as the Father gave me commandment even so I do.” (v. 30)

The Lord knew that nothing he had said or done could be used by Satan to hinder or divert Him from being the Sacrifice for sins, and rising from the dead. Furthermore, His motive and goal was not self aggrandizement but purest love and obedience.

In a world where saints will speak of their love for the Lord so freely, it is remarkable since this is the only time the Lord says it.

Love necessitates devotion, it is active, and in the case of our Lord, resulted in obedience to the Father. He now arises to fulfill the command of the Father, and for the world to know His love for the Father. That love was to be manifested to its fullest extent. This was the great antitype of:

- 1) The Burnt Offering when all was offered to God. (Lev. 1:9)
- 2) The Meal offering when all the frankincense was put on the altar. (Lev. 2:16)
- 3) The Peace and trespass Offering when all the fat was put on the altar. (Lev. 3:3; 4:26)

The Lord had bequeathed to His disciples commands to keep (Jn. 14:15) and a peace to enjoy (Jn. 14:27). There is nothing now to do but to move onward to Calvary. Thus Christ says: “Arise, let us go hence”. (Jn. 14:31)

The words: “The Prince of this world cometh” (Jn. 14:30-31) are words which, as appreciated, cause wonder and worship. At that time, the Prince of this world was preparing for his attempt to turn the Lord away from the cross. It was not the Prince of Grecia or Persia, nor the government of principalities and powers and ruler of darkness (Eph. 6:12). It was the Prince of this world coming personally, that is Satan himself. He knew full well that when Christ was raised from the dead, he, the evil Prince, would ultimately lose dominion of the world, be shown for what he is, and would lose many of his earthly adherents. This he would stubbornly oppose.

Having prayed together, they move together over the Cedron or Kidron, into the garden called Gethsemane.

The conflict was approaching, but it had not yet focused on Jesus. I say “Jesus” because in Matt. 26:36 it is Jesus who comes into the garden for the conflict.

Gethsemane was the beginning of the Lord’s darkest hours. The Lord said: “This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Lk. 22:53). That hour had not yet fully come, but the powers of darkness were assembling on several fronts. In Jerusalem, the last details were being finalized under the spirit rulers of this world and at the same time, the Prince of this world was en route to the Lord. The hour of darkness would soon come, but not yet.

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The Crossing Of The Kidron

Crossing the unpretentious brook must have brought thoughts of another rejected King to the mind of the Lord. David's greater Son is now following in the footsteps of His illustrious father. What an overcomer David had been.

- 1) In the time of war, he fulfilled the will of his father by looking after the sheep, and overcame the urge of adolescent rebellion and inquisitiveness. (1 Sam. 17:13-15)
- 2) While looking after the sheep, he meditated on the wonders of God and creation, and overcame the wastage of time in foolish daydreaming. (Psa. 8 and 23)
- 3) When his brothers accused him wrongfully, he overcame the temptation to retaliate against their accusations and assumption. (1 Sam. 17:34-37)
- 4) When he faced the lion, the bear, and ultimately Goliath, he overcame the fear of intimidation. (1 Sam. 17: 34-37)
- 5) When he could have had Saul slain, he did not, for he was content knowing God's purpose and in waiting His time, he overcame impatience. (1 Sam. 24:3-16)

Great as David was, Christ is the superior Overcomer. He overcame every temptation by Satan (Matt. 4:1-10); "I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). He was soon to face death, the very citadel of Satan, but He would overcome that too (Mk 16:9), and Satan Himself (Heb. 2:14), and every work of the Devil (1 Jn. 3:8). In Revelation He is the glorious Victor, overcoming the armies of the earth. (Rev. 19:11-19)

The main point in this context is: David was the God-appointed Shepherd King who, in rejection, moved over the Kidron, which means "dark". David crossed the Kidron weeping, having been cast out by his unrepentant son to whom he had shown such kindness. His son had in fact committed the ultimate act of treason against the King and against God, for David was God's anointed King. Solemn it is to read how that Israel rejected God as King despite all His grace and kindness to them (1 Sam. 8:7). One aspect of David's greatness is that in his rejection, he stopped to worship God (2 Sam. 15:30, 31, 32). One cannot help but see the similarities between David and the Lord.

For over three years the Lord had consistently shown kindness (Titus 3:4), and yet soon they would shout: "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn. 19:15). Christ was the rejected Shepherd King, who knowing the full intensity of His rejection, goes over the Kidron, and in His grief of soul He worships God.

Christ went over and began to weep. When David went across there were those who went with Him weeping (2 Sam. 15:30), but there was no one weeping with and for Christ, He was bearing the burden alone.

Jacob wrestled close to the brook Jabbok (Gen. 32:24) but the wrestling the Lord experienced, close to Kidron, had an intensity Jacob knew nothing about.

He wept in Gethsemane, knowing the sorrow of unrequited love from the nation, and the horrors which lay ahead of its inhabitants and Judas?

The Place Called Gethsemane

The Holy Spirit tells us three things about Gethsemane.

- 1) It was a "garden". (Jn. 18:1)
- 2) Gethsemane means "the oil press".
- 3) It was the Mount of Olives. (Lk. 22:39)

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It was the place where He and His Father had enjoyed deepest intimacies of fellowship, when He would have had the worship of the Father as a priority. The Lord Himself had said: "Father seeketh such to worship Him" (Jn. 4:23), and the Lord would have had great delight in doing that.

There is no doubt that worship would have included thanksgiving. The life of our Lord was always directed by the scriptures and in them is the exhortation: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise" (Psa. 100:4). His thanksgiving would not have been pious platitudes, but genuine gratitude. For the Lord, worship meant His continual personal affirmation of the exclusiveness of God's Godhood.

It must never be thought that the Lord didn't have a will of His own. He spoke several times of His will.

- 1) "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (Jn. 2:19)
- 2) "The Son quickeneth whom He will." (Jn. 5:21)
- 3) "I will in no wise cast out." (Jn. 6:37)

However, the Lord will never behave contrary to God. He could say: "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isa. 50:4) were true of Him. He listened to obey. It was in the garden He would find in God spiritual refreshment and strengthening after the spiritual conflicts of the day. Every speaker knows the spiritual weariness that comes after the conflict with the evil one when presenting truth, and the Lord was the same. His refreshment and rejuvenation was being alone with God.

- 1) It was the place of memories. On this mount He had sat and taught His disciples concerning things to come (Matt. 24:3), and true evaluating.
- 2) It was the place of anticipation of the joyful days ahead. How well He knew of those days ahead when from this mount He would ascend back to the Father and home (Acts 1:12). This was the place where His feet will touch when He comes to the earth to reign (Zech. 14:4).

This time it was different!

How things had, and would change. There he had known depths of glorious fellowship with His Father that none could ever know.

"And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives." (Lk. 21:37)

"And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple." (Jn. 7:53-8:2)

It was still His closet, still the place of fellowship and communion but tomorrow there would be no going to the temple, no verbal teaching the disciples, no ascension or manifestation of mighty victory. Tomorrow the great chasm would be entered into, the greatest conflict of His life.

The fact that it was a garden brings to remembrance two other gardens: the garden where sin entered, and the garden where our Lord was buried. In the garden of Eden the first Adam was placed, and the last Adam in the garden of Gethsemane. They are a study in contrast.

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	In Eden	In Gethsemane
1)	Adam exalted himself to be as God and acted in defiance of God's will, setting personal glorification above the glorification of God. In so doing, humanity was brought into a state of moral distortion, spiritual bondage and death.	The Last Adam was manifested as One who was submissive to God, seeking His glory. In so doing, He provided the way for man to be brought into eternal life and blessedness.
2)	The first Adam grasped after Godhood: "Ye shall be as God was the message of the evil One." (Gen. 3:5)	How this stands in contrast to our Lord: "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation." (Phil. 2:6)
3)	One sees the ease with which Adam sinned.	We see the agony of living a life devoted to God in conflict with his satanic majesty, the source of sin.
4)	Man is seen willfully forsaking God, and that not through any wrong God had done.	There is a Man who is willing to be forsaken by God, and that not for any wrong that He had done.
5)	Adam sinned and was totally ignorant of the personal consequences of his sin.	Christ was fully aware of the personal consequences of His obedience and what His sacrifice would bring to others.
6)	Adam opened the door for sin to come into this world, followed by death, (spiritually and physically), and he gave the government of the world to Satan who is now the Prince of this world.	The Son of God began the last steps in ultimately giving a world where sin would never again raise its distorting head, humanity would have life (spiritually and physically), and the government of this world would be given to He who is the Governor of the nations.
7)	Man sought to exalt himself.	The Lord, who lived a life of humility, exalted God.
8)	Taking the offered fruit seemed gain, but was actually loss.	Showing a willingness to take the cup seemed loss, but it was actually infinite gain.
9)	Adam set personal glorification above the glorification of God, and humanity was brought into a state of moral distortion, spiritual bondage and death.	The Last Adam, set the glory of God above His own glorification.
10)	God spoke hope to Adam after he had sinned.	The Lord spoke to God, but there was no hope of not having to drink the cup.

In the life of our Lord there was never an iota of time when He reconsidered that which he had come to do; neither was there ever the slightest degree of wavering. Therefore, now that the hour had come, He will in triplicate, confirm His devotion to God's purposes. This was a place of crisis for the decision that was made in past eternity to provide salvation, the time had now come. He was, as a man, "officially" accepting the cup. It was where the hour of the power of darkness began, but not the judgment for sin. That did not begin until the darkness in the three hours of darkness.

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We discover another glorious contrast when we set Gethsemane beside the garden where our Lord was buried and rose again.

	Gethsemane	Garden
1)	Was before His sufferings began	Was after His sufferings were forever over.
2)	Was the place of manifested weakness.	Was the place of the manifested might.
3)	Was the place of distress.	Was the place of victory.

“Gethsemane”, or “Gat shmanim” in Hebrew, means “the oil press”. The Hebrew word comes from two Chaldean words, “gath”, which indicates pressure, and “shemei”, often translated “oil” or “ointment”, where the context is fellowship. Thus, by its name, Gethsemane indicates a place of pressure and or, a place of fellowship. The enormity of the pressure by Satan to have the Lord turn away from the cup, and so sin is beyond human comprehension or experience. In that same measure the depths of fellowship with His Father was met.

In this garden the Lord prepared Himself for the darkness that lay ahead by reaffirming His devotion God and prayer before the storm clouds burst. Man had before sought to take Christ, but His time had not yet come. But this was now the hour. He had finished one work the Father had given Him to do, that of giving the disciples God’s word and declaring to them His name (Jn. 17:14, 26). He had instituted the Supper, thus indicating the ending of the old dispensation and beginning of a new.

Few saw His agony in Gethsemane, but in the other garden, Mary, the women who were returning from the tomb, and Peter and John went and saw the evidence that Christ was raised from the dead. With what exuberance of joy we can sing:

Its past the dark and dreary night, and Lord we hail Thee now,
Thy path on earth, the toil the tears, Thy sufferings all are o’er.
And oh sweet thought, Thine eye shall weep,
Thy heart shall break no more.

Beautiful are these truths for when we face storms and temptations on every hand. Prior to, and in those storms, let us learn from the Master the necessity of getting alone with God to pray and bow in true devotedness to the will of God. In Gethsemane, the Lord knew that He was going to meet God in His moral perfection of holiness (and as the representative substitute for sinful man). It is to the extent that we appreciate the preciousness of the sacrifice of our Lord, seeing there the holiness of God and the total corruption of self, that we will plead the blood of His Son for our acceptability. Approaching God in thanks, worship or prayer, and mentioning the name and blood of our Lord must never be allowed to become a formality, but be the expression of one’s heart and spirit. Gethsemane must teach us that there is no place for a casual attitude, a little indulgence, or a nonchalant attitude when it comes to sin, for my sin caused the Lord agonies in Gethsemane, and these much less than Calvary.

[The Prayer Postures In Gethsemane](#)

The Holy Spirit tells of three postures the Lord had in Gethsemane, postures that are not specified anywhere else concerning the Lord.

- 1) He kneeled down. (Lk. 22:41)
- 2) He fell⁴ on the ground. (Mk. 14:35)
- 3) He fell on His face. (Matt. 26:39)

⁴Robertson’s N T Word Studies and Linguistic key to the Greek New Testament by F. Rienecker and C. Rogers.

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The man with the lunatic son knelt before the Lord (Matt. 17:14) as did the leper (Mk. 1:40). They knelt, beseeching the only One who could help them in their distress. Now the Lord kneels in His distress to the only One who could help Him. Yet God is silent. The Holy Spirit, in drawing the curtain aside, presents a sight that causes a mind disturbing, numbing reverential fear. The Lord of glory lying prostrate on the ground.

The Lord lifted His eyes to God (Jn. 11:41), now His face is on the earth. This is the manifestation of utter prostration and heartbreaking implications. None but those who have been there know anything of this experience of unspeakable agony, and our highest experience of such is only a faint shadow of that which He knew. What an amazing sight that must have been to the angelic hosts, the mighty God, lying in unutterable grief on the ground His hands had made.

It is a wonder as to which is the greater wonder, the One who is the Mighty God needing strengthening, or not using His divine power to strengthen Himself. How infinite is this Gethsemane marvel, the One who lived in the fullness of joy experiences weeping in its bitterest level.

The Participants in Gethsemane

We are told specifically of two groups of people in the garden and two individuals and a third one intimidated. "One group was composed of the eight disciples and the other of the three; Peter, James and John. The two individuals were the Lord and the Angel who ministered to Him, and the intimidated one is Satan.

The Three Innermost Disciples

Deeper into the garden, the Lord brought the closest of His remaining disciples. These same three had been brought into the home of Jairus when his little daughter was dead (Matt. 9:25), to the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1), and now into Gethsemane (Mk. 14:33).

- 1) In the home, they were in the sphere of death and saw the glory of resurrection life.
- 2) On the mountain, they saw the glory of the Lord and heard the communication concerning His decease.
- 3) In Gethsemane, they saw He who is the Prince of Life facing life's deepest woe.

In these situations, they were given previews of His resurrecting power, coming Kingdom and sufferings. There can be no doubt that, at least for these three disciples, self-will and sin would never be viewed the same after seeing their Master prostrate, wailing, and petitioning with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7). Ultimately, they would understand the fullness of the love of God and Christ, the value God puts on His holiness, and the genuineness of the yearnings of His heart for the blessing of man. That which they saw and heard would effect their lives forever. There can be no doubt that:

- 1) As James faced the sword (Acts 12:2), I am sure the knowledge of the resurrecting power was a comfort.
- 2) When James and John, the sons of thunder, who were so quick to come in judgment on others, learned something of piteous grace as they saw and heard the Savior.
- 3) John learns the depth of love the Lord has for the Father and humanity. This comes out so clearly in his writings.
- 4) Peter needed to learn to accept the word of the Lord in His authority. Sadly, in Acts 10 he failed again. However, when we come toward the end of his days, Peter never forgot that which he saw. In his first epistle, he will speak repeatedly of the sufferings of the Lord and in his second, he will emphasize the glory of the transfiguration part of its significance.

There were other lessons they learned.

- 1) For the children of God, storms are never far away, and when dark days are on the horizon, pray. Soon the hopes of the disciples would be dashed, confusion would agitate their minds, and their purpose for life would never look darker. What then? Pray!

Meditations on Gethsemane

- 2) They would have learned to realize the need for watchfulness when his satanic majesty is about to work. (When is he never at work? Appendix. 1). Satan in his subtlety is a master opportunist and strategist, knowing how to subvert the will of the Lord for each of us.
- 3) They learned how quickly boastfulness would be put to the test; not only Peter, but all the disciples (Mk. 14:31). He had said: "Though all forsake thee yet will not I", yet flees like the rest of the disciples (Mk. 14:50). Because we do not know that which lies ahead, great care must be taken when making grand professions. All boastfulness made in the flesh, is a green light to Satan to zero in to test fidelity. Paul made a boast, but it was in the strength of the Lord. (Phil. 4:13).
- 4) They learned the weakness of the flesh when it comes to spiritual warfare. They all slept, but the Lord singles out Peter, and it is recorded: "He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, 'Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou watch one hour?'" (Mk. 14:37). The greater the boast the greater the focus for satanic activity and divine interrogation.

The Lord comes to them. How often in life it is a blessing to have human understanding and sympathy; but Christ had no one. It is very touching that the man who was the epitome of sympathy finds none in His hour of need. The professors all slept. This is one of the saddest pictures and commentaries on humanity in the scriptures.

The Lord tells them to "Watch and pray". Why? "That ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 22:40). Several observations are to be made. The Lord does not say: "That we enter not into temptation", this was a danger for the disciples alone. They were to pray for their own preservation.

Zechariah prophesied: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones." It does not say: "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered". Christ the Divine Author gives the interpretation saying "I will smite the shepherd", showing that He knew the smiting would come from God. The smiting had not yet come, but the offense of being associated with the Lord had arrived. "And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." (Mk. 14:27)

Note the words: "this night" (Matt. 26:31), "in this very night" (Matt. 26:31) (DBY)

- 1) Then saith Jesus to them, All ye shall be offended in me during this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. (Matt. 26:31) (NKJV)
- 2) Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered'". (Matt. 26:31) (RSV)

The words of Job could be spoken concerning Him: "Thou hast made me desolate of all my company". (Job 16:7)

Satan

Was Satan in the garden? It is easy to answer "No". I am aware of one reason for this answer. It is because he is not mentioned and it is not until Judas comes that the Lord says: "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Lk. 22:53). However, several observations make this "No" answer questionable.

- 1) First: When a major work for God is about to be undertaken, there will always be satanic opposition. His first line of defense is "prevention".
 - a) This is seen in the promise given by the Lord to Satan in Eden, the seed of the woman would crush his head (Gen. 3:15). Satan did not wait until Christ came to begin opposition.
 - b) It began very quickly with the murder of Abel. (Gen. 4:8)
 - c) This was followed by the moral corruption of the entire human population except Noah. (Gen. 6:11-12)

Meditations on Gethsemane

Throughout the history of humanity, and in particular the promised people, Satan never failed to exploit a situation in seeking to bring the promise to naught. Now the Lord was about to fulfill the great work of liberation from sin and death, and the kingdom of Satan, for all who would come to Him.

Since Satan had, from the beginning of time, sought to stop that, would he give up now?

- 2) Secondly: In the upper room the Lord anticipated Satan's coming, telling his disciples: "I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me" (Jn. 14:30). The Tempter, who, at the beginning of the Lord's ministry sought to disqualify Him by tempting Him to sin, would now draw on every weapon in his arsenal to prevent the Lord from going to the cross. Satan had too much to lose to stop now.
- 3) Thirdly: In Lk. 22:44 The Lord is in an agony⁵. "Agony", the Greek word indicates contest, intense emotion⁶. Vincent, in his: "Word studies in the New Testament" writes: "There is in the aorist participle a suggestion of a growing intensity in the struggle", Literally. "having become in an agony", that is a progression from the first prayer where the Lord "began to pray".

This is the activity of Satan, seeking to pressure Christ to avoid the cross and death but when the Lord will not be turned aside Satan will focus all his hatred on Him by using humanity to afflict Him through shame and suffering.

All who are involved in standing for God against opposition are aware of the physical weakness after the struggle, and the need for strengthening. This is not being strengthened before a temptation, but it is the strengthening for the enduring of the personal cost of doing the will of God, glorifying God.

The Angel

Amazing is the reality that because of the Lord's condition of weakness, an angel was sent to strengthen Him. God never sends angels for the sake of giving them something to do and whoever the angel was, it would have been with a profound sense of responsibility (Lk. 22:43). What precious lessons we learn here. For our Lord to be fully qualified as a High Priest, He must learn the need of strengthening from on high, not using His deity to strengthen Himself. The One who is the Mighty God is strengthened by an angel. Such a truth causes worship.

The truth is, this angel's coming showed the sympathy of Heaven. On earth the disciples were sleeping, unaware of that which was happening and going to happen. In the city the chief priests, elders, religious soldiers and Judas were gathering together and coming to the garden. They were intent on that which they were determined to happen; they cared not nor had any sympathy for Him. In His loneliness, agony, and internal grief; heaven can hold back no longer. God sends an angel. The unspoken message is clear, while none on earth may care, there is a man in Heaven who cares and understands. (1 Pet. 5:7)

The sending of the angel leads to at least two questions:

- 1) What was the purpose for the angel being sent?
- 2) How did He strengthen the Lord?

It may be that an experience of Daniel can give us some insight. Daniel had been given a vision of the glorious days of the beginning of the millennium (ch 9:24), but those days were a long way off. Dark clouds were on the horizon. Having been brought into a state of anguish and weakness (ch 10:8; 16-17) God sends an angel to strengthen him (vv.18-19). "Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, And said: 'O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.' And

⁵ See further notes on the Agony page

⁶ W.E.Vine Dictionary of Greek words

Meditations on Gethsemane

when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said: Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me". Daniel was weakened because of that which had been revealed to him (Dan. 10:1), and again by the understanding he was given (Dan. 10:15).

As the Lord knelt in Gethsemane He knew the kingdom was a long time off, and this combined with the knowledge of that which lay ahead of Him, and the struggle against satanic power may have added greatly to His weakness.

An angel, and then a multitude of the heavenly host came to announce and celebrate His birth (Lk. 2:9-14). They also came after His temptations (Matt 4:11); after His resurrection (Matt. 28:2), and after His ascension (Acts 1:10). After the temptations they (plural) ministered unto Him. In Gethsemane one angel strengthens Him. How profound this is; He who is truly God is so completely human, going through experiences so deep that no earthly being can help, only help sent from God. One wonders which is the greater wonder, the One who is the Mighty God needing strengthening or the not using of His divine power to strengthen Himself?

Here He was not being strengthened before a temptation, but for enduring the personal cost of doing the will of God, and glorifying God. In a way, the angel is prefiguring the High Priestly work of the Lord in strengthening us in the trial.

H. Hobbs, quoting Hobart, points out that apart from the Septuagint, the words, "to strengthen", in this transitive sense only occurs in Hippocrates and Luke. Luke being a physician, observes the bodily need for sympathy.

In Gethsemane the celestial, terrestrial and infernal met. The angel came from God, the disciples and Satan.

The Pathos Of Gethsemane

"Now is my soul troubled" (Jn. 12:27). This was the beginning of the Lord's distress.

Now He faced experiences He had never known before, at least to this extent.

- 1) He had never known physical pain like that which lay ahead of Him.
- 2) He had never known God's forsaking before, but that soon would happen. "
- 3) He had known rejection before, but never like that which was going to befall Him.
- 4) He had known humiliation before, but never like that which lay ahead of Him.
- 5) He had known what it was to pray before, but never like this. He had known emotional grief when looking over Jerusalem, over the rich young ruler, and at the grave of Lazarus.
- 6) He had known mental anguish when He entered the garden.
- 7) He had known soul pain when He was sorrowful even unto death.

His holy soul must have recoiled at the anticipation of these experiences.

Mere words can never convey the emotional, soul, and spirit agonies the Lord was going through. No matter how graphic, words can never convey the reality of what the Lord was enduring in Gethsemane. Statements by the Lord, and comments by the Holy Spirit are recorded for us.

The Holy Spirit's Comments

- a) The verses
 - i) Matt. 26:37: "He began to be sorrowful (lupeo⁷) and very heavy (ademoneo⁸⁵)

⁷ Strongs concordance no. 3076

⁸ Strongs concordance no. 85

Meditations on Gethsemane

- ii) Mk. 14:33: “He began to be sore amazed (ekthambeo⁹) and very heavy (ademoneo)”
- iii) Lk. 22:44: “And being in an agony (agonia¹⁰) He prayed the more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.”
- iv) Heb. 5:7: “In the days of His flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong (ischuros¹¹) crying (krauge¹²) and tears,¹ (dakru¹³)”¹⁴
- v) Heb. 5:8: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered (pascho¹⁵)”

The words:

“Lupeo”	This word is the opposite to “rejoice” and indicates an inward sorrow, not outward as in bewailing, etc.
“Ekthambeo”	This word indicates to cause great alarm, to terrify, to be struck with terror ² , “to be in the grip of a shuddering horror, in the face of a dreadful prospect” ³ .
“Ademoneo”	This comes from the word “ademon” which means uncomfortable, as one not at home, in a situation that causes distress, to be in a state of restless distraction that causes one to shrink from a trouble that cannot be escaped from ⁴ to be pressed down, or overwhelmed with great anguish
“Agonia”	This indicates the pain and labor in the conflict. With that there is the thought of that trembling that comes when faced with a foreboding situation, yet which there is no escape from.
“Ischurros”	To be mighty, indicating every emotion in lamentation, which can only be expressed by loud wailing.
“Pascho”	W.E. Vine has this under the heading “to endure suffering”

The Statements By The Lord

1) The verses

- a) “My soul is exceeding sorrowful (perilupos)¹⁶ even unto death.” (Matt. 26:38)
- b) “My soul is exceeding sorrowful (perilupos) unto death.” (Mk. 14:34)

⁹ Sarongs concordance no. 1568

¹⁰ Strongs concordance no. 74

¹¹ Strongs concordance no. 2458

¹² Strongs concordance no. 2906

¹³ Strongs concordance no. 1144

¹⁴ Rabbinic teaching indicated three types of tears related to prayers. First: “entreaty”, which was offered in a quiet voice; second: “crying”, which indicated a louder voice, and third: “tears”, which were the most emotional of all. Moffatt.

¹⁵ Strongs concordance no. 3958

¹⁶ Strongs concordance no. 4036

Meditations on Gethsemane

- 2) The words
 - a) “Perilupos”

This word is made from the words “peri” which means around, and “lupos” which means grief. Thus, the word indicated being surrounded by grief.

Putting this together then, the passages could be translated as follows:

- 1) “He began knowing an inward sorrow, and distraction being in a state of restless distraction, pressed down, and overwhelmed with great anguish. My soul is surrounded by grief, even unto death⁶”. (Matt. 26:37)
- 2) “He began to be in the grip of a shuddering horror, in the face of a dreadful prospect, and overwhelmed with great anguish, My soul is surrounded by grief, even unto death. (Mk. 14:33-34)
- 3) “And being in a trembling that comes when faced with ominous circumstances, from which there is no turning. He prayed the more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.” (Lk. 22:44)
- 4) “In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying, indicating every emotion in lamentation which can only be expressed by loud wailing crying and tears. . . Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the enduing of the things which he suffered.” (Heb. 5:7)

Gethsemane is where the hour of darkness began and the power of darkness began to manifest itself. It was the hour when satanic rage was vented on Christ, and human sadism was fully manifested. It was in this “hour” that man inflicted pain and humiliation on the Lord.

The Prayers Of Gethsemane

One of the precious truths to be learned from the example of our Lord, and saints, is when facing experiences that are overwhelming, to follow their path as recorded in the scriptures:

- 1) “From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” (Psa. 61:2)
- 2) “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.” (Psa. 5:3)

The Lord prayed when facing the intensified pains and griefs of satanic spite, human viciousness, and being God forsaken.¹⁷

⁶ Unto death. Illus. At times, for example when a spouse dies, such is the grief of the living that they feel that they almost die. It is a grief that is deep and internal, a mental distress that overwhelms the soul. In Gen. 37:35 Jacob could not be comforted upon hearing of the “death” of Joseph. “And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.” This sort of heartache is the result of being deprived of a loved one. As the Lord contemplated being forsaken by God, and the accompanying loss of “companionship” of the One He loved, it was to Him an agony unto death.

¹⁷ At times we face the possibility of impending storms. It may be the imminent death of a beloved child, major surgery facing loved ones, the loss of a business, a job, a home, or personal health. It is at times like these when we, like Christ, must go to God and find the strength to honestly say: “Not my will but thine be done”. With the Lord it was not just a possibility but an assured reality.

Meditations on Gethsemane

The Prayers in General

Prayer was an intricate part of the life of Christ therefore, it is not surprising that He prays in Gethsemane and on the cross. He began each day as a Servant in communion with His God and Father.

- a) “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.” (Isa. 50:4)
- b) “He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come”, thus, He prayed in early evening. (Matt. 14:23)
- c) “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” (Mk. 1:35)
- d) “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” (Lk. 6:12) Thus, He prayed all night.

Furthermore, His praying did not end on earth, but even now in the glory of eternal bliss, He is caring for His own and praying (Heb. 7:25). Consequently, it is not to be wondered at that when facing the darkest hours, He prayed.

Unlike every other son of Adam, the Lord never presented Himself to God by virtue of the acceptability of another. The people of the Old Testament could only approach God by way of a sacrifice (Lev. Chs. 1-6); and we by the Blood of Jesus (Heb.10:19). Christ never needed a mediating sacrifice, for there was never anything that caused a disturbance in the fellowship between He and the Father, and never the grieving or quenching of the Holy Spirit.

Being well aware of the attitudes of those around Him, our Lord could have quoted the Psalmist: “For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer and they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.” How beautifully it says: “I gave myself to prayer” (Psa. 109:2-5). In contemplating Gethsemane and the first cry from the cross, this is what He did.

The Contrasting of His Prayers

It is interesting to observe the distinction between the prayer of the Lord in Gethsemane and that in John 17. In fact, the only point they have in common is the word “Father”. In John the Lord does not say: “Abba Father or O my Father” but “Holy / Righteous Father”. Tabulated they are as follows:

Synoptic Gospels	John
Gethsemane	No Gethsemane
No High Priestly Prayer	High Priestly prayer
Father Abba Father O My Father	Father Holy Father Righteous Father
Agony and Turmoil	Peace and serenity
Alone	With His disciples
Prays concerning Himself	Prays on behalf of others

Meditations on Gethsemane

Synoptic Gospels	John
Anticipatory of His earthly ministry on behalf of all humanity	Indicative of His Heavenly ministry on behalf of His own

The Triple Prayers

Gethsemane is marked by triads:

- 1) There are three descriptions of the place. (refer to page 6)
- 2) The Lord is seen in three positions. (refer to page 9)
- 3) There are three disciples brought a little further with Him.
- 4) Three times the Lord says: "Not my will"
- 5) His declarations are before 3 gatherings: the celestial, terrestrial and infernal.

The scriptures are emphatic that the Lord said: "Not my will but thine be done" three times. The multiplicity of the affirmations did not come easier as the hour progressed. Why the three pleas and affirmations? Simply to give unreserved witness of His devotion for: "A threefold cord is not easily broken" (Eccles. 4:12). As a result, there is no occasion for any questioning of His sincerity and devotion to God. Let us not for a moment think that this was vain repetitions. This is the Lord in such an agonies that there were no other words to say, no other relationship to appeal on, and no deeper submission to bow in.

The Tense In The Prayers

Three times over the tense of the word "prayed," indicates the singularity of His prayer (Matt. 26:42, 44; Mk. 14:35). Three times over the tense indicates continuous praying (Matt. 26:39; Mk. 14:35; Lk. 22:41, 44). It was a singular prayer, but with agonized repetition.

The Wording In The Prayers

Matt. 26:39-44 "And he went a little further, 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. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. 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. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words".

Mk. 14:37-42 "And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not, what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Coudest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy) neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; 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".

Lk. 22:42-46 "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. 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. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation".

Meditations on Gethsemane

Distinctions In The Wording

1) Relative to God

a) “My Father” (Matt. 26: 39)

Two truths are indicated here: the fact that God is His Father and the uniqueness of His relationship with God (denoted by the word “My”). This is the expression which so angered the Jews (Jn. 5:17) for they recognized He was claiming God to be “His own Father”, and so claiming deity.

Quite different thoughts would be expressed if one of my children were to say to me: “My Father”, as opposed to “Father”. The former indicates a special relationship¹⁸ and a warmth which denotes loving, and knowing the love of the other. In Mk. 14:36 it shows that the Lord did not doubt in any way, the love of the Father. As the supreme act of love, He would perfectly obey the Father regardless of the cost to Himself. Love can be measured by what it gives up for the glory and delight of another.

b) “Father” (Lk. 22)

In this context the Lord does not call God “God”, but “Father” (Matt. 26:39) and “Abba Father” (Mk. 14:36). When the Lord calls God “Father,” the concept is relationship and mature appreciation. When Christ calls God “God,” it is always in the context of His humanity, i.e.: “Thou art my God from my mother’s belly” (Psa. 22:10); “My God My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? (Psa. 22:1). When He calls God “Abba”, it is in the sense of the complete trust of a child. The word “Abba” does not mean “daddy”. It is a term that is used three times in the scriptures (Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

c) The intensity of the prayer:

i) Three clauses assist us in appreciating the intensity of the prayers of the Lord:

1. The word “O” in the clause: “O my Father”
2. He prayed the more earnestly.
3. Being in an agony.

ii) The expression “O my Father” was spoken by the Lord at least twice over. This was not spoken casually but in great intensity, for Dr. Luke informs us: “Being in an agony He prayed the more earnestly”. One can sense the heart rending pleadings as He cried with strong crying and tears: “Oh my Father”.

Never did the Lord pray casually, or approach God in a casual way, every prayer was sincere. We read: “He prayed the more earnestly”. His praying was such that it could only be equalled by the intensity of that which He was going through. As the time grew nearer, the prayer become deeper, and the indescribable anguish of His innermost being resulted in sweat, clotted like blood.

d) Dr. Luke informs his readers about His sweat. I am aware that Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Alexandrines and Codex Vaticanus do not have Luke 22:43-44 in them. However, there are many other ancient documents in which it is recorded. Also, it is to be noted that when man sinned in Eden several things happened. Two of these were thorns and sweat. I am quite content that what the Lord experienced from the hand of man was the result of the curse on the land by His wearing the crown of thorns, and on the human body by His blood like sweat.

e) This is the last of three times it is mentioned in scripture.

i) “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return”. (Gen. 3:19)

¹⁸ The relationship of the Lord was not just a special relationship, it was unique.

Meditations on Gethsemane

- ii) “They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird [themselves] with any thing that causeth sweat”. (Ezek. 44:18)
- iii) “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”. (Lk. 22:44)

Did the Lord sweat blood? According to Dr. Frederick Zugibe (Chief Medical Examiner of Rockland County, New York) it is well known, and there have been many cases of it. The clinical term is hematohidrosis. “Around the sweat glands, there are multiple blood vessels in a net-like form. Under the pressure of great stress, the vessels constrict. Then as the anxiety passes, the blood vessels dilate to the point of rupture”.

It is no wonder the Lord was not comfortable, not “at home” in the garden. He faced being forsaken by God and entering into death, which was unnatural for him. The “cup” was the execution of the judgment of God against sin, which meant His being forsaken by God. These are depths of which no created being has full comprehension.

The Plea

During our Lord’s life people came to Him beseeching help.

- 1) The centurion for his servant. (Matt. 8:5)
- 2) The Syrophenician woman for her daughter. (Mk. 7:25)
- 3) The man for his son. (Lk. 9:39)

The earnestness with which they implored Him was clearly evident. They were not concerned about what people thought of them, their only concern being they thought only of the loved one. How quickly he responded to their cries, for their concerns were His concerns.¹⁹ Now it is the Lord who is beseeching the God who gives only good gifts to his children. How well He knew it was morally impossible for the love of God to man to be fully shown, God’s rights to be restored, Satan and his kingdom to be overthrown, and man restored to fellowship with God, except He drink the cup.

He was not asking for a way out of drinking the cup. That was the reason He came. The prayer of the Lord was not pseudo-spirituality or theatrics. The drinking of that cup was the bitterest gall, filled with the just judgment of God to the full measure of man’s sin.

To me, the Lord was asking: “Is there any other way?” Speaking reverently, He was asking God to look again and see if, even at this late hour, there was any other way in which perfect righteousness could be maintained, and the guilty be forgiven and reconciled to God. However, there was no reprieve from the horrors which lay ahead.

- 1) His Holy soul shrank from the experience of being forsaken by God. That was spiritual.
- 2) He shrank from the afflictions of the unflinching, un-curtained rod of God’s fury. That was physical.
- 3) He faced the horror of the darkness of a silent God.

It is a cause for wonder that our Lord said: “Not my will but Thine be done”. The only constraining was His love for God and man. There must be no coercion from God or anyone else, but an act of His own volition done in glad obedience. The Lord had said: “The cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it”? (Jn.18:11) “Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.” (Jn. 12:27). This is truly amazing, since: “God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7), how could the Lord happily say these words? Was it because His joy came from knowing that:

¹⁹ 1 Pet. 5:7 states: “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you”. The word “care” is a plural word, and the word “careth” is singular. It is a beautiful truth. Casting all your cares upon Him, for He only has one care and that is you.

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- 1) This was the will of God.
- 2) He would fulfill the will of God.
- 3) By His fulfilling God's will God would be glorified and humanity blessed.
- 4) Satan would be defeated and the pronounced promise of Gen. 3:15 would be fulfilled?

Only God knows how he did this.

Evil, self-centered men ruled Jerusalem, the temple was corrupted, pseudo religion joined with corrupt politics and self-will ruled. If the purpose of God was to be fulfilled, then the One who was the Lamb of God Himself must first submit to the will of God, and do so willingly.

Throughout His life, Christ manifested unflinching devotion to God and fulfilling the will of God. How then can we equate his devotion with His cries for the cup to be removed? In Gethsemane there is the expression of His dread of that which lay ahead, but there was not any wavering of devotion, or of the fulfilling of the will of God.

The Lord had made it clear that He would drink the cup, and that He had come for this hour, HOWEVER, readiness to fulfill the will of God, and pledging to do such, does not mean that one delights in that which is to be done or experienced.

In the first prayer, there is no mention of the cup, but of the hour (Mk. 14:35). This was more than the hour of darkness when the Lord was given into the hands of men, it may be part of it, but it is more. In the second prayer, the Lord brings before God that with Him all things are possible (Mk. 14:36), yet this must be understood in the reality of God's will and morality.²⁰ Yet it was the will of God "to bruise Him" (Isa. 53:10). What infinite love! Because of this tension, God's morality was such that there was no other way.

Luke seems to take up the second prayer in Mark: "If thou be willing", that is, if it is according to thy will. But He came, not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. Of Him it was written: "Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7). The will of God was that we should be sanctified: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (Heb. 10:10)

Many have been the suggestions as to why the Lord was in an agony. The following cannot be accepted because they are contrary to the words of the Lord:

- 1) The agony of the Lord was not that He feared death, or dying prematurely before He could be crucified as the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins.
- 2) Neither was it because He was suffering and distressed because of the separation from loved ones, or knowing that all his disciples would desert him and leave him alone.
- 3) Neither does this demonstrate that Jesus was a weak man, unlike Socrates, who drank a cup of poison with great serenity and calm.
- 4) Furthermore, it certainly was not that for the first time the realisation that he would be forsaken, nor whether the Lord would obey God or not. That was never in question.
- 5) It was not a prayer to be released from the agony of mind and heart He was experiencing.
- 6) It was not indicative of a conflict between He and God, in which He finally resigned to the inevitable and putting on a spiritual front say: "Not my will but thine be done".
- 7) Neither was it the afflictions from the hand of satanically inspired humanity.

The truths, which put an end to these satanic lies are as follows:

- 1) For the Lord to pray for the removal of any conflict between He and God was answered by His words: "I do always those things which please Him" (Jn. 8:29). Had there ever been any divergence of opinion between them, then Christ could never have been a sacrifice for sin, for He would have sinned.

²⁰ The things God cannot do, Appendix. 2

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- 2) The cup was not the sufferings from the hand of man, they never had a redemptive ability. The sufferings the Lord experienced from the hands of men were the expressions of satanic wickedness. The Lord laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. Interestingly, the “Blood” of our Lord is never mentioned until after He has died.

Why was the Lord in such an agony? It is my opinion that there are several reasons for this:

- 1) This was a bombardment by Satan, using every ability he could draw on to deter the Lord from the work God had given Him, and the grief of His soul in the anticipated forsaking of God, and Christ dreaded the forsaking of God for it meant:
 - a) The fierceness of the chastisement of God being borne by Him. (Isa. 53:5)
 - b) The fierceness of the piercing sword. (Zech. 13:7)
 - c) The cost of being made a surety. (Prov. 11:15)
 - d) The horrific of being made a sin and trespass offering. (Lev. 4-6)
 - e) Being judged as the substitution for all sinners, past, present, and future, for sin’s penalty. (Rom. 3:25)
 - f) Illustrated by the priest in the Holiest, only He Himself being the mediating sacrifice, and as man without a mediating sacrifice. (Lev. 16)

There was no other way. Christ must pass through that hour, and He must drink the cup.

The Decisive Point

At the crucial point, a decision had to be re-affirmed. Having the freedom to make choices and decisions is one of the God given blessings. Christ was a real man and had freedom of choice. In human assessment, some of His decisions were questionable because of the natural or prevailing attitudes. For instance, in not going to Lazarus when He was sick nor to the funeral; or when He deliberately went through Samaria, a matter compounded by speaking to a woman of dubious character. Again, what of choosing Judas, or letting a sinner woman wash his feet? The decisions of the Lord were not always the “accepted” ways. In all these there was, from the human perspective, His decisions were not the wisest, but wisdom is justified of her children (Matt. 11:19).

The personal cost of this decision to the Lord was beyond telling, for He was willing to have taken from Him that which He treasured beyond all other things, His companionship²¹ with God. This critical moment is emphasized by the repetition of variations on the clause: “Nevertheless not my will but thine be done”. (Lk. 22:42)

The magnificence of the word “nevertheless” cannot be over emphasized. On this statement hangs the glory of God, the unity of the Godhead, the redemption of humanity, the defeat of Satan, and the fulfilling of the purposes of God for time and all eternity.

No words in any language could describe the resulting horrors if the Lord had declared the slightest reluctance to drink that cup. Furthermore, even if He had not declared a reluctance, but it was in His heart, the consequences would have been unspeakable. In Rev. 8:1 there is silence in Heaven. It was the calm before the storm of the Lord’s appearing in judgment. I am sure if there ever was another deafening silence throughout the spirit world, it must have been when He said: “O My father take away this cup from me” (Matt. 26:39, 42). What must that sight have been to angelic and demonic personages as they saw the Lord of glory utter His impassioned plea, waiting for the response, not just of His lips, but also of His heart?

²¹ Herein is one of the greatest mysteries of all eternity, His fellowship and relationship with God was never broken, but even when forsaken by God, He was still in perfect fellowship with Him.

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God is unchangeable in Himself, irresistible in His purposes, and immutable in His promises. Salvation was the purpose of God and a promise therefore, did Christ have a choice whether to take the cup or not? The answer is a resounding “No,” because of four wondrous truths:

- 1) The love He had for the Father
- 2) His obedience to the will of God
- 3) His love for His own
- 4) The joy set before Him.²²

How can His pleas be understood? The experience facing the Lord was not pleasant. Being forsaken by God was one aspect, and incorporated in this was the afflicting by God. His fulfilling the will of God by becoming a substituting sacrifice was never in question, but the will of God is not always easy or without pain.

- 1) On one side, His love for the Father will not let Him stop, but on the other side, He had a dread of that which lay ahead.
- 2) On one side His zeal for the glory of God, and on the other hand, His dread of being forsaken by God.

This was the culminating of the tensions of the ages.

- 1) God had ever been zealous of the glory of His name, and at the same time, He had an abiding love for those who dishonor His name and longs to bless them. How can this be brought about?
- 2) God puts great value on His holiness, but how can He bring those, who delight in sin, into fellowship with Himself yet retain His holiness?
- 3) God is righteous, how then can He righteously punish the non-guilty for that which they did not do, and not punish the guilty for that which they do?

These are not incidental matters, but of momentous importance, and they must be dealt with in perfect righteousness. This is the glory of the clause: “nevertheless not my will”. The way the tension can be erased is by One who is perfectly qualified to volunteer to take the sinners place. The following illustration conveys the thought.

Many years ago, two of my aunts were in the same class at school. Aunt Myrtle was a timid weak child; Aunt Isabel was more strong and robust. One day little Myrtle had failed to do her homework and was brought to the front of the class to be given the discipline by a caning²³. As guilty Myrtle stood there, Isabel stood up and volunteered to take the caning for her. This was done, the guilty was reckoned as the guiltless, and the guiltless was reckoned as the guilty. However, was it right? Yes, because the guiltless had volunteered. That is what Christ did for us. Blessed be His Name!

Then the words which shout “salvation” to every individual of every clime in every age: “Not my will but thine be done”.

Our Lord asked: “If it be possible take away this cup”; “What was that cup?” In Matthew, Mark and Luke they all, within 22 verses, refer to two cups. “He took the cup” (Matt. 26:27) and in verse 39: “let this cup pass from me”. “He took the cup” (Mk. 14:23) and in verse 36: “Take away this cup”. “This cup is the New Testament” (Lk. 22:20) and in verse 42: “Remove this cup”. It is clear there is a relationship between the first and last references to the “cup” in each gospel. There is a distinction between the cup the Lord told us to drink and that which He drank. Ours is the “cup of blessing” (1 Cor. 10:16); “The cup of the Lord” (1 Cor. 10:21; 11:27). His was the cup of the execution of divine judgment.

²² These will be developed in: “The Singing of the Hymn”

²³ The cane was a bamboo rod about a meter long, which when hit, made the fingers or hand sting.

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What Was The “cup”?

It is emphatically stated that there is at least one thing this cup was not. It was most definitely not His being “satanized”, being made a sinner, nor afflicted by Satan or Satanic hosts in hell, as some have taught.

Did the Lord become “satanized”? Never! When our Lord was made an offering for sin, He was most holy. In the directions God gave for the sin offering He instructed the Israelites: “It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it unto them for their portion of my offerings made by fire; it is most holy, as is the sin offering, and as the trespass offering” (Lev. 6:17). Prior to this the Lord had said: “The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me”. Therefore, before Calvary He was holy, and on the cross He was holy. Then what was that “Cup”?

That cup was: “the cup the Father gave Him to drink”. The Lord said to Peter: “Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup, which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it” (Jn. 18:11). The drinking that “cup” was the ratification of the New Covenant, His suffering for sins, and in that, His being forsaken by God.

The use of the term “cup” indicates the punishment for sin:

- 1) “Wake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out”. (Isa. 51:17)
- 2) “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same.” (Psa. 75:8)
- 3) “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation” (Rev 14:10)

What did Jesus do? He reached out and took our cup. Ours was the sin, the rebellion, the wrath of God. Ours was the curse and eternal separation from God and all was in that cup. God gave this cup to his Son who prayed and took it. He, who will in a day to come, take the book out of the right hand of the Throne Sitter, now takes the cup” (Rev. 5). He had done so symbolically:

“He took the cup” (Matt. 26:27; Mk. 14:23; Lk. 22:17; 1 Cor. 11:25)

This can be developed with the emphasis on each word:

He took the cup

He **took** the cup

He took **the** cup

He took the **cup**

It must be stated emphatically that the cup was never in the hand of man or Satan! It was the Lord who laid on Christ the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:4-6). Jesus took the cup, not from the hand of the devil, but from the hand of God himself. Why did he take it? Because He loved us.

Being The Blood Of The Covenant, It Assures Of A Number Of Things:

- 1) A covenant indicates the security of that which is pledged. God made a covenant with Abraham when he was promised the land. Since the God who cannot lie gave this pledge, it is an eternal guarantee that can never be nullified. (Gen. 15:7-18)
- 2) God gave His word and as such, it was a covenant that He would fulfill His purposes concerning Christ as King, and the deliverance of His people. (Zech. 9:9-11)
- 3) At times a covenant can bring one under the rule of another to conform to their character, as illustrated by the covenant God made with His people at Sinai. “And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said, will we do, and be obedient. And Moses

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took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words." (Ex. 24:7-8)

- 4) It is God's pledge to us for making us "perfect", "thoroughly fitted" for the work God has for us to do. "Through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13:20-21)

Because He took the cup we can take in our hand the cup of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16) based on the Blood of Christ.

With rejoicing hearts we say with the Psalmist: "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD" (Psa. 116:12-13).

Infinite treasured gift of love, the Lord Jesus took our cup of wrath, sin, guilt, and eternal hell. He drank it and gave us the cup of blessing, thanksgiving, and salvation.

We can sing:

"Death and the curse were in our cup, O Christ twas full for Thee
But Thou hast drained the last dark drop, Tis empty now for me"

Then glorious is the truth, never again will the Lord suffer for sins, He has provided an eternal redemption.

We can further sing:

"Tis past the dark and dreary nigh and Lord we hail Thee now
Our Morning Star without a cloud of sadness on thy brow"

When we appreciate that "cup" and its precious blessings to us personally: "Shed for you" (Lk. 22:20); applicable for the whosoever for it is: "Shed for many" (Mk. 14:24); and praise God it is for: "the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28); we worship such a Saviour who could drink such a cup. There is a wonderful verse in Isaiah: "Thus saith thy LORD the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again." (Isa. 51:22)

He cries to God: "This hour might pass (parechomai, go) from me" (Matt. 26:39); "let this cup pass (parechomai) from me": "Take away (paraphero, bear away) this cup" (Mk. 14:36); "Remove (papaphero, bear away) this cup (Lk. 22:42).

The tense of these words are such that they are a plea for something that, if possible to begin now, yet, in it there is the feeling of complete dependence, leaving all to the will of the Father.

The Pitiful Sights Of Gethsemane.

When God made Adam and put him in the garden, it was a wonderful life. He was God's representative ruling over God's world and in that sphere, given great responsibilities. He also had God for company, yet we read God said: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Did Adam not have God for company? God recognized Adam needed a human companion. Man was made to be social, therefore, it must always be remembered the Lord was a man and loved human fellowship. When the vast majority of human beings are in distress they long for a person to be with them. Company is a wonderful blessing.

With great sadness we discover that after each time of prayer in Gethsemane the Lord comes to the disciples, but there was no human comforting there. The ancient scriptures foretell it:

- 1) He looked for comforters and found none. (Psa. 69:20)

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This is the One who said: “Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people” (Isa 40:1); but there is none to comfort Him. It is He who promised the disciples: He “will not leave them comfortless but will send a Comforter” just like Himself (Jn. 14:16, 18); but there is none to comfort Him. This lovely man will speak to the woman (Matt. 9:22), or the blind man (Mk. 10:49), and say: “Be of good comfort”, but stand alone in His sorrow.

Finally, after the third time of praying, the Lord comes to the disciples. Judas with the band of soldiers is not there yet, but they are on their way. The time for prayer is over and I see one of the most heartbreaking scenes in all the scriptures. The lovely Son of God sitting alone, comfortless, watching His sleeping disciples, totally unaware of that which is about to happen. Soon they would be made aware of a situation that would affect them for the rest of their days. What must He have thought in those moments of solitude?

The Coming Multitude

Then appeared the flickering of lights, as the ever growing stream of humanity came to “the place”.

But his was not as other times when multitudes came. Those had been glorious times when the multitudes came to hear His expositions of truth (Lk. 5:15), on at least one occasion, possibly out of curiosity and to get food (Jn. 6:26). There was also a time when soldiers had been sent to take Him, but this was different. (Jn. 7:46)

Man now having rejected the Lord on at least two levels, they come to put Him to death.

- 1) Man rejects Christ as the Light of the world, consequently, he now comes not only in the darkness of with lanterns and torches (Jn. 18:3), but additionally in his own satanic darkness.
- 2) Man rejects Him as the Prince of Peace, and now with hearts saturated with hate, know nothing of inward peace and they come to kill Him.

Some of the questions that come to our minds are:

- 1) How will He react to Judas and the throng?
- 2) How will He manifest the Father?
- 3) How will He the Light expose sin?

How Will He React To Judas And The Throng?

He responds with a comment throwing light on the covertness of their activity, but also showing that it was to fulfill the scriptures. (Matt. 26:55; Mk. 14:49)

The Lord has no further words for Judas, just as He had nothing to say to Herod (Lk. 23:9), certain questions of the religious leaders (Matt. 26:63), and Pilate (Matt. 27:14); but speaks to the rabble sinners (Mk. 14:41). How beautiful is his moral character seen in this situation when the Lord recognizes there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. (Eccles. 3:7). He is in control of the situation. It is not they who speak and He must answer, but He speaks and they must answer. He asks several questions:

- 1) “Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me?” (Mk. 14:48, Lk. 22:52)
- 2) “Whom seek ye?” (Jn. 18:4)

Boldly they respond: “Jesus of Nazareth”, to which the Lord answers: “I am”. The expression “ègo eimi” is used of persons who were not deity, for instance, Gabriel (Lk. 1:19); Zacharias (Lk. 1:18); false Christs (Matt. 24:5). At times our Lord used this expression without any indication of deity (Jn. 8:23). In this situation I see a blending of the declaration of who he is (the one they sought) and a declaration of His deity. By acknowledging it was He was whom they sought, He protected His disciples. In this we see the Shepherd character of the Lord.

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Notice how they fell: “They went backward and fell” (Jn. 18:6). The glory of His fearlessness, the restlessness of a guilty conscience pricked deeper from the comment following the first question and resulted in a terror and stress, causing them to go backward and then fell on their faces. To my mind verse 8 substantiates this interpretation. When men became aware that they were in the presence of God, they trembled or became as dead men, and fell on their faces. They obviously got up and when the Lord answered the same again, they did not fall, but came and bound Him. He permitted this. This shows the weakness of the powers of darkness when placed before the man, Jesus of Nazareth.

How Will He Manifest The Father?

Being the great Shepherd of the sheep, He cares for His own saying: “Let these go their way” (Jn. 18:8). There is no doubting the love Peter had for the Lord, for He will face the mob, and cutting off the High priests servant’s ear puts his life on the line. Love does not count the danger nor personal cost. Mary did not consider the “how” of taking away the Lord; David did not consider the “what if” when dealing with Goliath. Love seeketh not her own. Love will endure ridicule and Peter will stand for the Lord.

Touching the ear the Lord heals the man. No one could point to the man’s ear and accuse the Lord of not having control over his followers. Not an iota of evidence remained to show that the ear was cut off. Thus, even at this late juncture, He was still doing good. However, there is a lesson to be learned from this action of Peter. It is never God’s purpose for us to take up arms against the government. Leave the matter to God, He is in control.

Tenderly, but with authority, the Lord speaks to Peter: “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? The Lord was conscious of the armies that were at His disposal. The king of Syria had sent a mighty army to take Elisha captive. Upon seeing this army, the young man with Elisha was frightened. Elisha prayed that the Lord would open his eyes, and when the Lord answered his prayer, the servant saw “The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kgs. 6:17). Again, when Sennacherib came against Israel and the Angel of the Lord, in one night 186,000 men were slain (2 Kgs. 19:35). The Lord was moving in accordance with the revealed purposes of God, therefore He says: “But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? (Matt.26:54). His condescending grace is amazing, but why did He not call on the angelic power?

- 1) For this was the Father’s will: “The cup my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?” (Matt. 26:52; Jn. 18:11)
- 2) For He came to seek and to save, not to condemn. (Lk. 19:10; Jn. 3:17)
- 3) For to be able to sympathize and succour the saints when they are under exceeding opposition. (Heb.2:18)
- 4) He knew this was the pathway to glory. (Heb. 2:9)

The word is given: “Let these go their way” (Jn. 18:8). This was not a request, it was verging on a command, and as soon as there was an opportunity they all fled. And yet not all, Mark informs us that a young man followed Him, and it is after the disciples all flee.

That which is important is not who he was, how he came to be dressed only with a sheet, if he lived close to the garden, etc. If any of these had been important, the Holy Spirit would have told us the answers. That being said, what we do know about this young man was that he was not one of the twelve, he did not make great boasts, but he did follow the Lord when all the disciples fled.

Who this was we cannot tell, and all suggestions are void of any biblical evidence. Why is it inserted here and what does it add to Mark’s narrative? It is possible that there is a similarity between this and: “He that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day” (Amos 2:16). This young man showed wonderful bravery in following after all the others had fled, but even he found that being too close to Christ could have serious repercussions. One fact stands out, he like the balance of the disciples fled, consequently the Lord was left alone.

Meditations on Gethsemane

How Will He The Light Expose Sin?

There could be no malice or resentment in the heart of the Lord for these individuals. How could there be, it was they He had come to die for (Lk. 19:10). It was for them He would pray: “Father, forgive them” (Lk. 23:34) but He will make them conscious of their sins by His questions.

- 1) Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me? (Matt. 26:55)
- 2) Jesus said unto him, “Judas, betrayest thou the son of man with a kiss?” (Lk. 22:48)

Just as when the woman was brought before Him he said: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (Jn. 8:7). Then we read: “They which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out” (Jn. 8:9). No doubt when the Light shone, consciences were pricked and very possibly His words rang in their ears like the toll of funeral bells.

The Kiss Of Judas

There are names in the scriptures that automatically cause distinct imagery to arise.

- 1) One only has to say: “Jezebel”, and a notoriously evil woman comes to mind.
- 2) “Judas”, and one visualizes a double-faced person, one who could appear to be zealous of the needs of the poor, a man who, with the other disciples, walked with the Lord, did miracles, and preached the gospel. Yet this man was diabolical in wickedness, void of any loyalty, and saw Christ as a commodity to be used for his own purposes. His greed for material gain began some time previous. He had charge of the money, and took from it for his own purposes. (Jn. 12:6)

Ominous are the words: “The Devil put it into his heart to betray the Lord” (Jn. 13:2).

It was when the woman poured the expensive oil upon the Lord, that the dastardly deed was set upon (Jn. 12:1-4). Unlike the woman who came to the Lord in devotedness and love, Judas comes in treachery and for material gain. There is a startling comment: “He went to the chief priests”, and planned the “how to” of the arrest, the “how much” in money, and the “when” in time (Mk. 14:10). Then, having done all that, in pious obnoxiousness, he sat at the table with the Lord and ate the Passover. Solemn are the words: “Satan entered into him” (Jn.13:27). Little did Satan know this deed of treachery would ultimately be his defeat (Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8).

Judas: “receives the band,” (Jn. 18:3); and they are with him (Matt. 26:47); he stands with them (Jn. 18:5); and one of the most heartbreaking scenes in all of scripture unfolds before one’s eyes. In the most infamous act of treachery time and eternity will ever know, Judas goes and kisses the Lord.¹⁰ This was the sign he had given them, for there must be no mistake, the wrong person must not be taken. The moral beauty of the Lord is the only radiance in the scene. He will, by an expression but not in a holier than thou attitude, ask a question for the personal conviction of Judas. This is not the time for judgment, but for the manifestation of the heart of God, concerning a man with distorted values. Christ is the Light and by His very being, Judas is seen for what he is and values. His actions speak louder than words, and how very ominous they were. The very lips which said: “Master, is it I?” are the ones which said: “Hold him fast” (Matt. 26:48); “Take him and lead him away safely” (Mk. 14:44). In these words Judas showed where his priorities were. The commodity must not be lost, the money was too be had. To Judas, the “goods” must be delivered intact.

Judas kisses the Lord. How lovely was the kiss of reconciliation and forgiveness that Joseph gave to his brothers (Gen. 45:14-15); or the kiss of delight between Aaron and Moses when they saw each other (Ex. 4:27); or the kiss

¹⁰ The word indicates to kiss fervently and is only used in 6 verses of the New Testament. Twice it is used of Judas (Matt. 26:49; Mk. 14:45); twice of the sinner woman (Lk. 7:38, 45); once of the father (Lk. 15:20); and of the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:37).

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of restoration given by the father to the prodigal son (Lk. 15:20). In dark contrast to these is the kiss of murder by Joab to Amasa (2 Sam. 20:9); or the kiss of deceit by Jacob to Isaac (Gen. 27:26-27). But no kiss was as despicable as the kiss of Judas to the Lord. Deceit and murder were in that kiss, and in so doing, Judas lost forever the possibility of the kiss of reconciliation, forgiveness, delight, and restoration. It is hard to comprehend, Judas kisses the Door of Heaven, and died in his sins a few hours later!

This expression of affection became the expression of Balaam who grasped for material gain, irrespective of spiritual consideration (Num. 22:1-21). It is an indicator of his “could-not-care” attitude concerning friendship with divine Persons, forgiveness, or peace with God.

One can feel the burdened affection in the words of the Lord: “Friend wherefore art thou come?” (Matt. 26:50). This expression does not really indicate that which the Lord said.

Vincent points out that it literally is: “that for which thou are here.”

- 1) “Friend, do that which you are here to do.” (ASV)
- 2) “And Jesus said: unto him, Friend, do that for which thou art come.” (DBY)
- 3) “Friend, do that for which thou art come.” (Montgomery)

How did the Lord feel? Knowing the heart and love of the Lord, with what infinite tenderness and sorrow, the Lord spoke to Judas. The Lord knew that in a few hours maximum, this man would realize the horror of a guilty conscience, and realize too late that there was no reversal of the situation. With the money scalding in his hand, he went to the chief priests confessing he had “betrayed the innocent blood”, but it meant nothing to them (Matt. 27:3-4). Grief filled his heart, and the only way of relief he saw was suicide. What agony Judas went through we cannot tell, nor with what sorrow the Lord looked upon him, appreciating as only He could, the horrendous crime which he had done and its consequences.

One shudders to think of the next time he will see the Lord. He will stand alone, yet with the masses at the great white throne (Rev. 20:11-15). There will be no “friend” from the Lord then, but will hear those words: “depart from me into everlasting fire” (Matt. 7:23). Judas had lived in a “Christian” community, for 3 years he lived in close proximity with “Christian” company, and yet died in His sins. How like uncountable thousands in this world, brought up in Christian homes, having Christian parents, going to Christian churches, and yet will be lost forever in hell. One wonders, how would the Lord have prayed for a Judas, and how ought we to pray for those who are privileged to have Christian surroundings, yet still lost in their sins?

The Lord's Going Out

In the Old Testament, one of the animal illustrations of the Lord is that of the ram. It is a rich picture in which we see a mature male with dogged determination. The Hebrew word translated “Ram”, is also translated “mighty Man”.

- 1) It is connected with God's Covenant. (Gen. 15:9)
- 2) It speaks of substitution and sacrifices. (Gen. 22:13)
- 3) Of consecration. (Ex. 29:22)
- 4) Of the food of the priest. (Ex. 29:26)
- 5) The Burnt offering. (Lev. 8:18)
- 6) The peace offering. (Lev. 9:4)
- 7) The trespass offering. (Lev. 19:21)
- 8) The sin offering. (Lev. 5:15)
- 9) Persistence. (Dan. 8:4)

It is the persistence of Christ that is now manifested. Christ had spoken of the coming kingdom, sharing His government with those who were like Him, and the love He had for the Father. These purposes must be fulfilled, the time has come for the securing of them, and He “went forth” (Jn. 18:4). This King will not stay at home in a

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safe place when others fight for His kingdom⁸. Other kings will flee⁹. Christ will not only stand alone, but with deliberateness of footstep, will go out to experience the last steps in His qualifications for priesthood and drink the cup. Because this is the will of God, an opportunity for Him to show His love for the Father, He will not confront them in agitation, but will make the work they have come to do easy for them. With ram like resolve He will go forward, and in this: “He shall not fail nor be discouraged” (Isa. 42:4), will be partially fulfilled.

- 1) The Hebrew word “fail” (Isa. 42:2) is translated “restrained” in 1 Sam. 3:13. Four times it is connected with the eye. (Gen. 27:1; Deut. 34:7; Job 17:7; Zech. 11:17)
- 2) The word “discouraged” is literally “broken,” that is, checked in zeal by discouragements.

Oh, praise God this wonderful man could never be broken (Eccles. 12:6; Isa. 36:6; Ezek. 29:7; Hos. 5:11) nor crushed (Amos 4:1). His eye was unwaveringly fixed on the purpose of God and the sufficiency of God to sustain Him (Isa. 42:1). Consequently, His zeal for the fulfilling of divine purposes could never be restrained, neither a lack of faith ever hinder the will of God through Him.

He will wait for them to come, and when they do, He will not hold back, but in the power of God, filled with zeal for the glory of God and the fulfillment of His purposes we read: “Rise let us be going” (Matt. 26:46; Mk. 14:42). It is after we read those words that the next clause is: “And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas”.

Now the Lord says dark words: “This is your hour, and the power of darkness”. The hours of satanic venom to be directed on the Lord, in an all-out attempt to have Him turn back from fulfilling the will of God, have now begun in earnest.

The Lord Was Bound

I have never been handcuffed in my life, but the thought of walking through a shopping mall with police on either side in handcuffs, would be to me exceedingly embarrassing, especially if I had done nothing criminal. What must our blessed Lord have felt when surrounded by an unsympathetic mob, He was bound.

The scriptures record a number of individuals who were bound. As far as I can determine only one was a woman (Lk. 13:16) and it is in a spiritual and physical level.

- 1) Isaac was bound because of obedience to the father. (Gen. 22:9)
- 2) Joseph, because of obedience to God’s principles of fidelity. (Gen. 40:3)
- 3) Samson, because of sin. (Judg. 16:8, 12, 21)
- 4) The three Hebrews, because of devotion to God. (Dan. 3:21)
- 5) Paul, because of the gospel. (Acts 22:29)
- 6) Zedekiah, because of rebellion against the discipline of God. (Jer. 39:7)
- 7) Barabbas, because of personal sinfulness. (Mk. 15:7)
- 8) John, because of speaking faithfully the word of God. (Matt. 14:3)

Several truths become clear by way of similarity and contrast.

When the lovely Son of God was bound, He was the bound Son because of His obedience to God, obedience to God’s principles, devotion to God, speaking faithfully God’s word, and for the providing of the gospel. But He was never bound due to his sin, rebellion against the discipline of God, or personal activity in wickedness.

The wonder of it is that the Son of God is the Jehovah of the Old Testament and concerning Him it is recorded: “He bound up the sea” (Jer. 5:22); “He bound up the waters” (Prov. 30:4). Profound reality, the unbounded God

⁸ As David did

⁹ Jeroboam 1 Kgs. 11:40

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whose power is unlimited and undiminishing was, by the creatures he had made, bound. This is condescending grace at infinitum.

Yet the reality is that while He was bound, He was the only free man, “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free” (Jn. 8.36). He was free in spirit, undamaged by inherent sin, and undistorted by external corruption.

Yet, this was the first of the “bindings” physically but not in purpose: “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar” (Psa. 118:27). Away in the vastness of eternity past, the beloved Son was the appointed to be the Sacrifice for sin, and was bound to that commitment.²⁴

Now for those who trust Him, they are brought into liberty, the glorious liberty of the sons of God. This would never have been possible had he never allowed Himself to be bound.

Viewing this from another aspect, Christ is God, and while on one hand God can never be bound, yet the reality is that God has set limits on His own ability and sovereignty. When God said that he would never again destroy the earth with a flood, it was not because He cannot, but He has bound Himself to commitment. God promised eternal life before the world began. Who did He promise it to? Not to man, for man had never yet been made! Not to angels, for salvation was never provided for them. He promised it to Himself that he would share eternal life with humanity.

Christ is led for the sham trials, and Satan having used Judas, casts him aside as a nothing. Judas realized too late the dreadfulfulness of that which he had done. He confesses his sin, he returns the money, but no money on earth could buy the Lord back, or ease the searing conscience.

The Practical Lessons Of Gethsemane

- 1) The backgrounds:
 - a) When there is strife among the saints, the Lord’s attitude in Gethsemane is the answer to conflict.
 - b) When there is human glorying and boastfulness, Gethsemane is the answer to these attitudes.
 - c) The Psalmist writes: “Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel” (Psa. 78:41). It is plainly told us that in His sovereignty God permitted man to limit His activities. We can limit God for us as the children of Israel did when they failed to enter the land and then when they went into the land but failed to possess it. Indeed Psa. 78 brings a number of ways in which we can limit God. He can be limited through selfishness, through fear, unbelief, disobedience, failure, pride as with Saul, and immaturity as is brought before the Colossian saints.

²⁴ This is further developed in the document: “Meditations on They Sang a Hymn”.

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Appendix No. 1

Those Who Satan Is Directly Associated With

The possibility that I could consider myself to be too insignificant, then consider:

The Individual	Reference	The Feature Of The Individual
Eve	Gen. 3:1-6	A housewife going about her normal activities.
David	1 Chron. 21:1	A saint away from God.
Job	Job 1:8; 2:8	A God fearing business man.
Joshua	Zech. 3:1-4	A man about to become a priest, to be saved.
Peter	Lk. 22:31	A saint Satan was going to put under pressure.
Judas	Jn. 13:27	A man who never would be saved.
Ananias and Sapphira	Acts 5:1-4; 9-10	A married couple trying to make a good impression.
Paul	2 Cor. 12:7 1 Thess. 2:18	A missionary to whom God revealed glorious truths.
Christ	Matt. 4:1-11	The Son of God.
Man of sin	2 Thess. 2:9	A political and intellectual giant.

Note: The only ones not applicable to us are Christ and the man of sin.

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Appendix No. 2

The Things God Cannot Do

God Made A Promise

God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began (Titus 1:2)

While it is true that with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26), But Jesus beheld them, and said: unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Yet, there are at least 10 things God cannot do:

- 1) He cannot be tempted with evil
 - a) "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil." (Jam. 1:13)
- 2) He cannot change
 - a) "For I am the LORD, I change not." (Mal. 3:6)
- 3) He cannot deny himself
 - a) "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." (2 Tim. 2:13)
- 4) He cannot lie
 - a) "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie." (Heb. 6:18)
- 5) He cannot look on iniquity
 - a) "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." (Hab.1:13)
- 6) He cannot faint, be wearied, or limited in His understanding
 - a) "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding." (Isa. 40:28)
- 7) He cannot be partial
 - a) "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regarded not persons, nor taketh reward." (Deut. 10:17)
- 8) He cannot ignore about sin
 - a) Thus saith the LORD unto this people, "Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins." (Jer. 14:10)
- 9) He cannot find another way to provide salvation
 - a) And he went a little further 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." (Matt. 26:39)
- 10) He cannot die
 - a) "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them." (Deut. 33:27)

**May God grant us good understanding as He, by his Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**