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## The Tension In Gethsemane

### Readings

Matt. 26:38-42

### Introduction

It is almost impossible to miss the similarity between the crossing the Kidron by David (2 Sam. 15:23) and the Lord (the brook is called “Cedron” in the New Testament). David was leaving Jerusalem and in the darkness of the night and deeper darkness of His soul he crosses the brook. How did he go over the brook Kidron? To all outward appearances he went out of Jerusalem in apparent defeat, but yet as an overcomer.

- a) In the time of war he fulfilled the will of his father by looking after the sheep, thus overcoming of an inquisitive spirit (1 Sam. 17:13-15).
- b) When looking after the sheep He meditated on the wonders of God and creation (Psa. 8:3-8), the overcoming of empty amusement.
- c) His brothers accused him wrongfully but He overcame the temptation to retaliate against their ignorance and assumption (1 Sam. 17:34-37).
- d) There was a time came when he faced the lion, the bear, and ultimately Goliath, but he overcame intimidation (1 Sam. 17:34-37).
- e) Opportunity arose when he could have had Saul slain, but did not, thus he overcame impatience (1 Sam. 24:3-16).

Christ lived as the supreme Overcomer.

- a) He overcame every temptation by Satan (Matt. 4:1-10).
- b) En route to Gethsemane He said, “I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33).
- c) He was soon to face death, the very citadel of Satan, and will overcome that (Heb. 2:14).
- d) In Revelation He is the glorious Victor, overcoming the armies of the earth (Rev. 19:11-21).
- e) He will overcome the government of Satan in finality (Rev. 20:10).

Gethsemane is where the hour of darkness and power of darkness began (Lk. 22:53). It was the beginning of the hour (not a 60 minute hour but of undetermined time) when satanic venom was going to be vented on Him and human sadism fully manifested. It was in this “hour” that man inflicted pain and humiliation on the Lord. This was His suffering for the fitting of Him to be our High Priest, but not as the sacrifice for sin. Those sufferings were in the hand of God exclusively.

### The Lord's Closet

How things had and would change. This was His “closet” where nights had been spent in communion with God after one days activities and before the next. What depths of glorious fellowship He and the Father had enjoyed together in that place.

- a) “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).
- b) “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).

Into His closet the Lord comes, but not as on past occasions. This time was different. Tomorrow there would be no going to the temple. His ascension and glory were a long way off, and a deep dark chasm would take place before those wonderful days of His glorification could be known.

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

- a) He knelt down (Lk. 22:41)
- b) He fell on the ground (Mk. 14:35)
- c) He fell on His face (Matt. 26:39). In Matt. 17:14 the man with the lunatic son knelt before the Lord, as did the leper (Mk. 1:40). They knelt beseeching the only One who could help them in their distress. Now

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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 an awe-inspiring sight, the Lord of glory lying prostrate on the ground. The Lord had lifted His eyes to God (Jn. 11:41), but now His face is on the earth. This is the place of utter prostration and heart breaking imploring. No one can know anything of this experience. The unspeakable agony and grief which we may face is only a faint shadow. What an amazing sight that must have been to the angelic hosts, the mighty God, lying on the ground His hands had made, and tears coursing down the face of deity.

#### The Pathos of Gethsemane

In Gethsemane we enter a sacred mystery. No part of it can be explained by language nor comprehended by any intelligence. Every word the Lord speaks is fraught with incomprehensibility. He said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (Jn. 12:27). This was the beginning of the Lord's distress. Our Lord had a body that was holy and therefore, the physical pain He felt was far more intense than that which we would experience. He had known emotional grief when looking over Jerusalem, at the grave of Lazarus (Jn. 11:35). He had known mental anguish when He was entering into the garden, but now in the garden He was sorrowful, "even unto death" (Matt. 26:38).

- a) He was about to go through experiences He had known before but never to this extent.
- b) He had known rejection before but never like that which was going to befall Him.
- c) He had known humiliation before, but never to that which lay ahead of Him.
- d) He had known what it was to pray before, but never like this, for it is recorded, "He prayed more earnestly" (Lk. 22:44).
- e) He had never known physical pain like that which lay ahead of Him.
- f) He had never known being forsaken by God before, but that soon would happen.
  - i) Those experiences so obnoxious to Him, His holy soul recoiled from. In the garden the Lord was not complaining, it was the mourning of an anticipated loss. He who lived in the deepest fellowship with God was going to have that closeness removed from Him. It was:
    1. Not that He was going to be bereft of the love of God for He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life" (Jn. 10:17).
    2. Not because of a tension between should He obey, or judge the price He was about to pay too high, for He came to be the "Saviour of the world" (1 Jn. 4:14), to "Do the will of Him that sent Him" (Jn. 4:34), and to glorify God (Jn. 17:4).
    3. That which He dreaded (at the least) was when being made sin, the fierceness of the divine judgment.

Mere words can never convey the emotional soul and spirit agonies the Lord was going through any more than we could convey to an abundantly healthy individual the feeling it is to sit in a doctor's office and be told that one has terminal cancer. Words, irrespective of how graphic they are, can never convey the reality of that which the Lord was enduring in Gethsemane. Here there is recorded for us both statements by the Lord and comments by the Holy Spirit.

The pathos and crisis point was reached when the Lord prayed, "Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk. 22:42). This was the crisis point when the reality of the "sword and cup" were only a matter of hours away and the profession of the Lord was to be tested.

- a) His love for the Father was now being put to the test (Jn. 14:31).
- b) His love for His own was being put to the test (Jn. 13:1).
- c) His dedication to do the will of God was now being put to the test (Heb. 10:7).
- d) His being in unison with the Father was being put to the test (Lk. 22:42).
- e) His burden of seeking to glorify God was being put to the test (Jn. 17:4).
- f) His manifesting the Father and God was being put to the test (Jn. 1:18; 14:9).

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This was the “point of no return” and the tension between:

- a) The zeal of God for His holiness and zeal for to bring unholy men into fellowship with Himself.
- b) The righteous character of God that must punish rebellion, and the sparing of those who rebel.
- c) The justifying the guilty and punishing the righteous.
- d) The joining of righteousness and peace, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10).

On this decision hung:

- a) The unity and fellowship of the Godhead. What devastation if He would have withdraw from that which lay ahead, for one member of the Godhead at enmity with the others, one member siding with Satan in rebellion against the known will of God.
- b) The holiness of Christ would be shattered forever, consequently never again could one speak of His immeasurable perfection in His devotion of Christ.
- c) The demonstration of the value Christ put on the glory of God would be offset by His own self seeking, but thank God, “He pleased not Himself” (Rom. 15:3).
- d) The demonstration of the importance Christ put on the development of the purposes of God which is to head up everything in Christ (Eph. 1:10; Heb. 2:8).
- e) The defeat of Satan (Heb. 2:14).
- f) The predestination of the redeemed to be, “conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:29).
- g) An open way of reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:10-12). The word translated “atonement” in verse 11 ought to be “reconciled” as the context shows (2 Cor. 5:20).
- h) A priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9).
- i) The fulfillment of the sacrificial illustrations of the Old Testament (Lk. 24:25-27; Matt. 3:15; 5:17).
- j) The fulfillment of the divine promises regarding:
  - i) Eternal life (Titus 1:2)
  - ii) The New Covenant with the house of Israel and Judah (Jer. 31:31).

### Conclusion

Thank God for that man who pleased not Himself (Rom. 15:3), but in that hour of darkness did the will of God to perfection.

*. . . Rowan Jennings*