

Gethsemane - the Last Battle

by Alan Redpath

Jesus' agony in Gethsemane was the result of the weight of sin, which he bore in his own body, and it is a reminder of the horror of sin and the completeness of Jesus' atonement.

Duration: 33:56

Scripture: Exodus 3:5, Matthew 4:10, Matthew 26:41, Mark 14:36, Luke 22:44, Acts 16:25, 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

Topics: "Gethsemane"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He begins by emphasizing the loneliness and anguish that Jesus experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus sought comfort in human friendship but found none, so he turned to prayer. The preacher highlights the persistent and fervent prayer of Jesus, which brought him comfort and strength. The sermon also explores the cause of Jesus' agony in the garden, emphasizing his willingness to do the will of God even if it meant obedience unto death.

Transcript

Shall we pray? Give me a sight, O Saviour, of thy wondrous love to me, the love that brought thee down to earth to die on Calvary. Was it the nails, O Saviour, that bound thee to the tree? Nay, t'was thy everlasting love, thy love for me, for me. O make me understand it, help me to take it in, what it meant to thee, the Holy One, to bear away my sin, for Jesus' sake.

Amen. Would you turn with me, please, to the Gospel of Mark and the 14th chapter? The Gospel of Mark and chapter 14, verse 36. 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. We shall be considering, my dear friends, this morning, and again on Wednesday and Thursday and Friday evenings, some of the events which led up to the cross, like Moses, when he saw the burning bush and was told to take his shoes from off his feet.

So, in the spiritual sense, should we. For indeed, we are on holy ground, as we consider today, this verse and this portion of God's Word. You will recall that having eaten the Passover and instituted the Lord's Supper, our Lord Jesus went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives, and then, as they went, they sang a hymn.

And in the 32nd verse of this chapter, they came to a place which was named Gethsemane. If you have a revised version, you will notice in the margin, it reads, they came to an enclosed piece of ground. I feel that it is so enclosed that somehow, it seems to exclude all of us.

This is a passage of Scripture which is best read and considered alone on our knees. Why did our Lord choose Gethsemane? I can only suggest two reasons that seem to come to my mind as I prayed about it. There was not a blade of grass upon which he had not knelt in prayer.

This was a sacred place, consecrated by his constant visits and fellowship and communion with God. And he chose the place of greatest communion for the scene of the last battle, the greatest conflict. Furthermore, John tells us in the 18th chapter and the 2nd verse of his Gospel, that Judas knew the place.

Our Lord wasn't running away from anybody. He wasn't trying to hide. When his hour was come, he was in a place where Judas knew he could find him.

And the cheek of our Lord was all prepared to receive the kiss of a traitor. He delighted to do the will of God, even though that will led him to the obedience of death. And as we try to follow this morning some of the experiences in that garden, I fear that some of us, like Judas, may not enter into anything of it.

Others, like the eight disciples who were left just inside the enclosure, will see it at a distance. Others, perhaps like the three, will go a little further and come a little nearer. But I think that all of us will be far away from understanding what really happened.

For our Lord Jesus was utterly alone in Gethsemane. You will notice, of course, the agony. And it is about this that I would like to try to speak to you this morning.

What was the cause of his agony in the garden? Notice how it's portrayed to us. Verse 33 and 34. He taketh with him Peter and James and John, began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, and saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.

Surely God's perfect man had perfect courage. He was always a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and yet there was never a moment in his life when he was disturbed. My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. His was a life of absolute rest at all times, except in Gethsemane. His peace departed.

It was agony, unrest. You catch the picture of it. He went forward a little, verse 35, and fell on the ground and prayed.

Verse 37. He cometh and findeth him sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Watch and pray. Again he went away and prayed, and spake the same words, and when he returned, he found them asleep.

And he cometh the third time, and said unto them, sleep on now, take your rest. Back and forward three times to his disciples, to appeal for their prayers. And Luke, Dr. Luke, who should know, tells us in his record of this, in the 22nd chapter and the 44th verse, his sweat was as great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Oh beloved, this couldn't be shrinking from physical pain. Many a man, especially a Christian man, has faced torture with a song in his lips. Paul and Silas in a Philippian prison did that.

It couldn't be, it couldn't be, the fear of death. It couldn't be an attack of Satan. Our Lord had conquered Satan in the wilderness, face to face, 40 days, 40 nights, without ever a murmur, without ever any trace of complaint or unrest.

I think the answer to our reverent inquiry is in our text. All things are possible unto thee, take away this cup from me, nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And here our Lord in Gethsemane is taking a cup from his father's hand, not from the Jews, not from Judas, not the disappointment of sleeping disciples, not even from the devil.

But he's taking a cup from one whom he knew was his father, who had appointed him this bitter portion, a cup from which he shrank, a cup which at that moment, God the Father was holding to the lips of God the Son, that he might drink it to the last drop. Something far worse than physical pain, something far more dreadful than any attack or onslaught of Satan, something inconceivably awful, and it came from the Father's hand. You remember these verses? All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to our own way, but the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

It pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief. Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Our precious Saviour is about to bear the curse due to me and to you.

He's going to stand in our place, therefore before he can ever do that, he must suffer in our stead. Could we try and think just for a moment what that meant to him? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow. As God, he was perfectly holy, incapable of sin.

As man, he was spotlessly pure, yet he had to be made a sin offering, something loathsome. He had to be taken without the camp and consumed with the fire of God's judgment upon sin. Oh that he must stand before God in the position of the sinner.

To be looked upon, if you please, to be looked upon by the Father as if he were all the sinners in the world. As if he had committed all the sin of all people for all time. For it was all laid upon him, and the judgment due to it all was poured, and focused, and centered, and inflicted upon the one spotless Lamb of God.

And as the Father looks upon the Son, he sees there all the sin of all the people upon one, the servant of Jehovah. To be treated as a sinner, to be smitten of God as a sinner, though in him there was no sin. Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

This was the cup which he drank, to stand where I should have stood, to pay the debt to the justice of heaven, due from me, due from you, which we could not possibly pay. It was this that laid him low, the cause of his agony. But may I dare, and I pray God that I shall not attempt to draw aside a veil which God has shut.

But may I attempt to show you something of the character of his agony that day? Mark uses some tremendous words to describe the agony of Jesus. You notice one of them in verse 33. He began to be sore amazed.

That's a word that you only find in Mark's gospel. You would find it in the 9th chapter and the 15th verse, where the people were so amazed as they gazed upon Jesus when he came down from the mount of transfiguration. You would find it again in the 16th chapter and the 4th and 5th verses, where the women who went to the empty tomb were affrighted, as the word is translated there, affrighted, as the angel spoke to them.

Sore amazed. It means literally absolutely stunned with astonishment. It means the pain of an unbearable shock.

But our Lord Jesus was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It was no surprise to him that he was there, was it? No. He had foreseen the agony of the cross from the very beginning, yes? Ah, but when it came upon him, it was infinitely worse than anything he had ever expected.

The awful experience of having sin in totality heaped upon him, the one Lamb of God, was more terrible than anything he had dreamed. And the last lesson which our Saviour learned in the school of obedience was learned in a sense of absolute amazement. He was sore amazed.

The next word is, he began to be very heavy, full of heaviness. And I understand that word to mean being completely absorbed in sorrow to the exclusion of everything else. As a man whose mind is staggered by a sudden blow, have you stood by the lifeless body of one who for years has traveled through life with you and become as precious to you as life itself, and suddenly he's gone, she's gone, full of heaviness.

Ah, but that's not a thousandth part of what this word means to Jesus. His tears came, my dear friend, listen, it's terrific, his tears came not through his eyes but in blood through his body. His sweat was as drops of blood falling upon the ground.

And he has sunk in spirit down to the very depths. He was very heavy. And the next word is exceeding sorrowful.

And that means hemmed in by sorrow. You remember the psalmist said, the pains of hell got hold of me. All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me, Psalm 42, 7. He was exceeding sorrowful.

Above him and beneath him and all around him and within him was sorrow without one little ray of relief, not one bit of light in darkness. His disciples couldn't help him. They were all asleep except one, and he was on the road to betray him.

And in the presence of his Father amidst the crushing burden, his spirit cried out and said, Father if it be possible, exceeding sorrowful. And Luke, Dr. Luke, crowns it all with a word which absorbs all the others when he says, he was in an agony. And that means a conflict, a wrestling.

With whom was he wrestling? Not with his Father. If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.

The conflict was not with heaven, friend. The conflict was with himself. Jesus had a human will, you know, as well as a divine will.

Not what I will, but what thou wilt. He was under no necessity to go to the cross. What is of grace is not of necessity.

Oh, but had the cross been declined, salvation would have been unknown. The sensitiveness of that spotless human nature shrank from any contact with sin. And yet, the love of his heart said, bear it, stoop beneath the load.

Agony. The agony of an awful battle in the soul of the Son of God. You see, the purity that was his, the absolute purity that was his, could bear no connection with sin.

And that purity was omnipotent, almighty, holy God. The love which was his, which couldn't bear his people to perish, the love which knew no limit to its endurance, no fading of its hope, the love which could outlast anything, that love was omnipotent, almighty. And within the bleeding heart of Jesus, the passion of love and the passion of holiness and purity, two holy, godly, pure passions fought a titanic struggle within the bleeding heart of the Lamb of God.

I don't wonder that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood. Ah, I repeat, God forbid, that I should attempt to gaze or ask you to gaze within a veil which Jesus and the Lord of glory have drawn. The old hymn says, tis to God and God alone, that his griefs are fully known.

I've gone as far as I can to suggest to you something of the character of the suffering of the Lamb of God. Did he have any comfort in his agony? Yes. He sought help in human friendship, but found none.

What then did he do? He prayed, says the record, he prayed the more earnestly. And he found comfort in the relationship of a little child that cries, Abba, Father. Anguish, the like of which the universe has never known before or since.

And of anguish brought the Lamb of God, like a chastened child, to appeal to a father's love, and least ever, Father, if it be possible. It was prayer, persistent, fervent, repeated, constant prayer which brought him comfort. Luke says that an angel came to strengthen him, and the cup was drunk to its dregs.

And I read the sense of mastery over it in verses 41 and 42. Take your sleep. It's enough.

The hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go.

Oh, he that betrayeth me is at hand. The battle has been fought and won. The greatest crisis has been fought and faced alone.

Not a friend, not a comforter, Abba, Father. I dare not seek to put you or me anywhere within that picture, but I ask you today, beloved, do you know anything in your life about a taste of Gethsemane? Do you? You going through a grief, a heartache, you crying as Jesus did, Abba, Father, then I urge you to imitate your Master and to cry to him and say to him, if it be possible, but not my will, but thine, Lydda. I would like to take the remainder of my time this morning in speaking to you a little bit about the consequences of this agony of the Master, that we might apply them to our lives.

There are some precious and solemn implications here. I think some that strike me very deeply are, in the first place, the humanity of Jesus. Oh yes, he is God, absolutely, but he is also man.

And as I gaze into the garden, I know that he can understand completely. We have not a high priest who cannot be touched by the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, for ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin.

Hebrews 12, 3 and 4. I think I've said from this pulpit, I say it again, I've never dared to preach a sermon from that text, and I don't think I ever will. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin. He did, he did.

Oh, the humanity of Jesus. This much I do know. There's never a pang, never a pain, never a trouble, never a sorrow that touches your life or mine, to which he is a stranger.

Oh, I beg of you that you would not only today lift up your heart to know that he is God, but lay hold of him as a brother who was born for adversity, and he will bear you through anything, absolutely anything. But then I also, I also find myself amazed as I think of the horror of sin. Sin must be a dreadful thing if it crushed Jesus like this.

Oh, that men would really know what sin is, and what the wrath of God against sin involves. Oh, for a Holy Spirit conviction against sin. Oh, that your heart and mine today may see the horror of it, the loathsome of it.

I don't believe that anybody ever comes to Jesus for salvation who hasn't stood before the Lamb of God and seen himself a rebel, an enemy, lost, undone, doomed, condemned, and his only hope to fly quickly for refuge to the bleeding side of the Lamb of God. I'm not sure that that is in our preaching these days very much. It's snap decisions we want in order to be successful.

God save us, God save us. Oh, that I might have, you might have, my dear listener, such a conviction of sin that you see yourself this morning if you're not in Christ so hopelessly lost that you dare not leave this meeting, this building, or finish this service without running to the fountain that's yet open for sin and uncleanness. But then I think, too, my heart is gripped with the completeness of his cross, his atonement, how black and sinful I am.

We all are. God knows we're only fit for the lowest hell, and I marvel that God hasn't sent me to it long ago. I'd have got what I deserved if he did.

But then I go to Gethsemane, and I see Jesus wallowing on the ground in blood and anguish. And I hear his groans and cries, and I see his sweat, his bloody sweat. And I hear him say, Father, not my will but thine be done.

And then I understand, bless his name, how God in heaven can spare me. He has smitten his Son in my stead. Can he demand payment twice? Can he scorch and consume me? For our God is a consuming fire.

Can he do that when he's already consumed the burnt offering in Jesus? Oh, no. I see justice satisfied. I see the law of God honoured.

I see my guilty soul set free. I see that the fire of the justice of heaven has just burnt itself out into ashes upon Jesus, my substitute. And I see that the law, the holy law of God, has exhausted its every demand upon the person of the one who was made a curse for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in him.

I see the completeness of his obedience and sacrifice. But, oh, brother and sister, if I see anything in Gethsemane that chills my soul with horror, I see the awful consequences of rejecting what God did for me there. I see more clearly than ever the terror of the punishment that must fall upon those who reject his

atonement.

I do not find, I recognize theological problems, but I do not find any problem. In the light of what I've been saying to you this morning, I do not find any problem about believing in the eternal conscious punishment of the Christ-rejecting soul. If sin did this to Jesus, what in God's name is it going to do to the man who rejected? And what happened to Jesus thereafter? In the next few hours is exactly a picture of what will happen to someone listening to my voice who may be rejecting Christ.

For sin, like Judas, betrayed him with a kiss as it has betrayed you with a kiss. And it's hounded you off to judgment, and one day there'll be a resurrection morning, and you will stand not before the judgment of Pilate, but before the judgment of a holy God, and you will be speechless as Jesus was before Pilate, and you will be condemned, and the cry that came, crucify him, will be altered in that day, and the cry that will come from the throne will be depart, ye cursed. God will say that to the Christ-rejecting soul, and in your agony of rejection you will cry as Jesus cried, I thirst, but there will be no provision except the gall of bitterness for all eternity.

You have despised my Saviour, and sin that made my Saviour suffer agony will one day make the Christ-rejecting soul suffer agony too, if you die rejecting the mercy of God. Oh beloved, grant today that the tears, the groans, the bloody sweat of Gethsemane may warn you before it's too late to get right with God, to repent and believe the gospel, and to receive the living Christ into your heart, for he paid it all for you. Bearing shame and scoffing rude in my place, condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with his blood, hallelujah, he's my Saviour.

Oh God, may we lift our hearts to thee, and may be tear-stained faces to thee, as we think of what it meant to thee to bear away our sin.

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