

Gethsemane

by Anton Bosch

Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane shows the intensity of the struggle with sin and the importance of prayer in overcoming temptation.

Duration: 42:50

Scripture: Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 15:15-20, Hebrews 4:16, Hebrews 5:7, Hebrews 12:2-4

Topics: "Gethsemane"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the intense suffering and temptation that Jesus faced during his crucifixion. The preacher acknowledges that he himself gives in too quickly to despair and gives up easily. He emphasizes the importance of coming boldly to God's throne of grace and seeking mercy and grace in times of need. The preacher also highlights Jesus' struggle with the temptation to end his suffering and return to his divine position, but he ultimately endures the pain and takes on the guilt and sin of the world. The sermon emphasizes the need for prayer as the secret to victory in times of temptation and struggle.

Transcript

Turn with me to the book of Hebrews and chapter 5, please. Hebrews chapter 5. Now, tonight is going to be a little bit more difficult. It's going to be a challenge and I estimate that we probably have the more mature folk here this evening, braving the rain and the sleet and the snow and the weather to be in God's house.

And so, I'm going to take you into an area which maybe you have not considered before and there are going to be some thoughts that you may find rather revolutionary, but I trust that they are biblical. And we're on the theme of considering our high priest, the Lord Jesus. And I want to speak with you from chapter 5. We were in chapter 4 last night, verses 15 and 16.

And I'm going to go to chapter 5 and let's read from 1 through 11. For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subjected to weakness.

Because of this, he is required as of for the people, so also for himself to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify himself to become high priest, but it was he who said to him, you are my son, today I have begotten

you.

As he also says in another place, you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, and was hurt because of his godly fear. Though he was a son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered. And having been perfected, he became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him, called by God as high priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, of whom we have much to say and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

Now, last night we spoke about the fact that we, verse 15, have a high priest who can sympathize with our weaknesses, because he was in every point tempted like we are. And the question we have to ask is, when was Jesus tempted like we are? And we know that the common reply would be that when he was tempted in the wilderness. And remember that he was tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread, to jump off from the pinnacle of the temple, and to fall down and to worship him.

And there's a lot that we can learn from those temptations. And yet, when I look at those temptations, and when I look at the record in the Gospels, I don't really see, if we have to be honest, I don't really see Jesus being pushed to the limit. It seems that the exchange is relatively easy.

The devil says, turn these stones into bread, and he says, it's written, may you shall not live from bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I don't see a struggle. And so, if that is what Hebrews is referring to, then it's very hard for me to say, well, Jesus really knows what it is to be pushed to the edge, because I don't see it there.

I don't see a struggle in the wilderness. And surely, if there had been a struggle, surely it would have been recorded. So, when was Jesus tempted? When was his temptation such that it was the same as you and I experience? And I believe that, and when you go back to the Gospels, you'll find that it says that the devil left him, at the end of the third temptation, the devil left him for a more opportune time.

In other words, the devil says, I'm not done with you yet. I'm going to come back at a time which is more opportune. In other words, when you will be more susceptible to the temptations that I have to offer.

When was that? I believe it's the Garden of Gethsemane. And I want for us to have a look at the Garden of Gethsemane, and also at the whipping of Jesus. And I'm not going to go into graphic detail, I don't go into that sort of thing.

But I want you to see some very, very important principles in these two events. And it is that experience in the Garden, I believe, that the writer to the Hebrews is referring to in verse 7. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death, was heard because of his godly fear. And in all of the record of the Gospels, there is no record of Jesus praying with this kind of intensity.

We know he prayed many times. We know that he went up in the mountain and it was private prayer between him and his father. And yet there is one occasion when he prayed, and when he cried out to God with his whole being.

And that was in the Garden of Gethsemane. And you'll see that he goes on in verse 8 and he says, And so he's connecting this verse to the fact that he learnt obedience. So we have to look at what time, at what occasion did the issue of obedience become an issue for him.

And again, I don't see that in the three and a half years of his ministry. I just see Jesus going about and just doing what the father wants him to do. His mother says, you know, we've run out of wine.

He says, it's not my time. A few hours later, he gets direction from the father and he turns the water into wine. And so he lives the rest of his life just doing the things that the father directs him and there's no struggle for him to do that.

But the issue of obedience became a problem in the Garden of Gethsemane. Now just remember that when it says that he learnt obedience, you need to read the scriptures very specifically. The scriptures are specific.

The details matter. It does not say that he learnt to be obedient. Doesn't say he learnt to be obedient.

He learnt obedience. There is a difference between learning to be and learning something. Jesus did not have to learn to be obedient.

He always was obedient. So that wasn't a skill or an attitude that he needed to culture or develop. He had that.

But at the same time, it would be very hard for me to look at Jesus and say, you know, when I struggle to do the will of God, when God's will and my will are in conflict, and that happens many times a day for me. I know you don't have the same problem. But how can he understand how hard it is for me to put aside what I want and to do what he wants? Because he was always naturally obedient.

And that's why he has put through this process of learning what it means to be obedient. What obedience really means. You see, you can have the theory.

I can teach you how to swim. I can say, well, you know, you need to move your arms like this. You need to kick your legs like that.

But you're never going to know how to swim until you get into the water. And you actually do it. And you can theorize about obedience, and Jesus can have an understanding of obedience, and he can be perfectly obedient.

But he does not understand what obedience really means to me unless he has been put in the same position where there is a conflict between his will and the will of the Father. And so in Gethsemane, he learned not to be obedient, but what obedience was. What the price of obedience was.

How hard it is to be obedient. What the temptation is to not be obedient. And so in the garden, he is tempted.

And people say, well, you know, it doesn't say that he was tempted. But you remember what the struggle, what the issue was. Not my will, but your will.

But if there's some other way, then let me go that way. Now, I'm going to come back to that in a moment. And you remember that last night I said that it doesn't matter that Jesus was not tempted with a specific sin that you struggle with.

Because the struggle is the same, whether it is with alcohol, or whether it is with sex, or whether it is with money, or whether it is with pride, or whether it is with doing the will of God. It always comes down to the

same issue. My flesh and my spirit, or what the flesh wants and what God wants.

It's always the same issue. And the intensity of that struggle is exactly the same. And so here Jesus is now facing the same issue that the alcoholic faces.

What is the issue for the alcoholic? To do what his body and his mind wants, or to do what God wants him to do, and to abstain. It's the same issue. His will, or the will of God.

What is the issue for the gambler? His will, or the will of God. It's the same issue. What is the issue that we face when we need to be reading the word, and we want to watch television? It's the same issue.

My will, and the will of God. And so here in the Garden of Gethsemane, you can see the struggle in its bare reality. And remember that we introduced this idea last night that Jesus was perfect man when he lived on earth.

He had set aside his divine power and divine prerogative. And so he's living. Yes, he is God.

He has all of the power and the privilege of God in his back pocket. He can draw on it any moment. But if he did, and this is an important thought, I'm going to come back to this in a few minutes.

If he did, he would fail. Because his commission was to live just like a man. Just like we do.

And so he enters into the Garden of Gethsemane, and there's his will as a man. And the will of the Father. And in a sense, there was an internal struggle also.

Because part of him was God. Part of him was man. And the God part said, do this.

The man part said, I don't want to do that. And it's the same struggle that you and I face. And Paul goes into this in much detail in the book of Romans when he speaks about the fact that the flesh and the spirit are at enmity.

And there's this fight and the struggle going on within us between the spirit, which is the God part, which is in relationship, in contact with God. God's spirit married to our spirit. We're one spirit with him and my human nature.

So you can see Jesus is there in the Garden of Gethsemane and he's perfectly representing us. Exactly the issues that we face and exactly the struggle that we have to struggle with, Jesus is now struggling with in the Garden of Gethsemane. And so it's simply an issue of do I do God's will or do I do my will? And in chapter 12 of, keep your finger in chapter 5, I'm going to come back there in a minute.

But in chapter 12, and I'm going to probably touch on this tomorrow evening, Lord willing, but we'll see how it goes. We find this interesting verse. Let's just read verse two of chapter 12 says, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Verse three, consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Then verse four, you have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And I don't like this part of this translation because the original sentence says, you have not yet resisted to blood in striving against sin.

What does he mean? You have not yet resisted to blood in striving against sin. Now remember, sin in the way that I'm dealing with it this evening is anything that is not the will of God. To steal is not the will of God, and therefore it is sin.

To watch television when I should be praying, if that is the will of God at that moment, watching television becomes sin. Sin is anything that is not the will of God. Sin is whenever I allow my flesh to overrule the voice of the Spirit.

Now he says, you've not yet resisted to blood in striving against sin. So he's saying in struggling against sin, and he's writing to all Christians of all time, you've not come to a point of blood. What is he referring to? I believe that he is grain referring to Gethsemane.

With that struggle within Jesus, between his flesh and his spirit, between his human nature and his divine nature, became so intense that the blood vessels on his forehead burst, and it says he sweated great drops of blood. That's how intense the struggle became. Now chapter 12 he says, you have not yet got to that degree, that point.

Why don't we get to that point? We give in, exactly. We give in or we give up long before we get there. And so Paul is able to say, well, sorry, the writer to the Hebrews is able to say, you've never got there.

You've just not struggled with the issue of sin to the degree of blood. And yet Jesus did. And so I see Jesus pushed to the very edge.

Now, I need to move on because I'm actually needing to cover much more territory than I really have time for. But let's go back to chapter five, and I just want to touch on one or two things in that passage. Who in the days of his flesh, reminding us that he was a man, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death.

Now I'm going to come back to the save him from death bit. But what did we say last night? Let us come boldly to the throne of grace. Jesus understood that there was one who could strengthen him.

There was one answer. There was one solution. There was one who could save him.

And he turns to that one. Now remember in the garden with him were three other disciples or three disciples. And what did they do? They had their own struggle.

What was their struggle? Sleeping or not sleeping? And we say, well, you know, that's really a minor issue. No, for them it was just as intense. But the difference was they gave in.

They gave in. And Jesus is bitterly disappointed. And he says, could you not watch with me just one hour? And then he says, these are the words, which we know so well.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. And so Jesus was tying that together with Paul's teaching, the flesh and the spirit. And my spirit wants to do the right thing, but my flesh just doesn't want to comply.

And yet Jesus was expecting those three disciples to overcome the flesh, to overcome the tiredness and the weariness and to pray with him. And they did not. And yet he says to them, watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation.

The secret to success, the secret to victory in temptation, the secret to victory in times when I'm struggling with my will versus the will of God is prayer. He cried to him who was able to save him from death. He says to the disciples, watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation.

Let us come boldly to the throne of grace. That we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in a time of need. Folk, when we come to that point of struggling with temptation, with discouragement, with doing the will of God or doing my own thing, the solution and the answer does not lie in gritting your teeth and saying, I will not, I will not, I will not.

But the solution lies in casting ourselves upon him who is able to strengthen us. And yet so often when we face those temptations, when we face those struggles, the last thing we want to do at that point is pray. And yet that's what Jesus did.

Now notice he offered up prayers and supplications with vehement. The old King James says with strong cries and tears. To him who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his, in the new King James, godly fear and the old King James in that he feared.

Just hold on to the save him from death but I'm going to come back. What does he mean that he was heard? Because here's obviously a secret. To victory in a time of temptation, a time of trial, the secret seems to be first of all praying and then he was heard in that he feared.

I don't like the new King James which is what I use when it inserts the word godly fear. The reason why it inserts that word godly before the fear is because it is trying to differentiate between the many different Greek words for fear that you find in the New Testament. There are different words.

There are some words that speak about a terror and a dread but the word that he that he uses here is a difficult word and some translations translate it as respect or as reverence. The way that you understand that I can understand that word fear that he uses there is the kind of fear that you should have when you climb into your motor car and you drive out of the parking lot here. You see it's not like I don't want to get into this thing but we know that insurance rates for young people is double, triple sometimes what it is for older people.

Why? Because they make more accidents. Why do they make more accidents? Because they have no fear. They have not learnt respect for this machine that can kill.

They have not learnt that this thing is unforgiving at times and only once you've made a few mistakes and you've made a few accidents you begin to fear the thing. You begin to respect it. In flying they say you get bold pilots and you get old pilots but you don't get old, bold pilots.

You see when a pilot loses his fear, his respect for what he is doing he becomes dangerous and it's that word that he is using here. A respect and a fear in the sense of saying what I'm dealing with here is very, very serious and critical. These are eternal issues.

He understood the consequences if he had failed. He understood the issues that were at stake and so there's a reverence and it has nothing to do with a reverence towards God. It's a respect for the situation.

It's a respect for the dangers of what he was dealing with and I think that one of the things that the book of Hebrews does for us is that it warns us of the dangers of falling away. Unfortunately too many people think they're clever and think that once you're saved you're always saved. The book of Hebrews as you've gone

through it I'm sure you've discovered that over and over and over there are these warnings and folk when we lose our sense of respect, our sense of fear for the fact that there is a possibility that I may fail remember Paul having preached to others I myself become a passed away and we say serving God that's a breeze.

I can't fail. I can dabble with sin and it's not gonna hurt me. I can backslide a little bit and I'll come back again.

It's when we lose that fear that we're in a very, very dangerous place and I'm not suggesting that we should and I know people who teach eternal security say that those of us who don't teach that doctrine that we motivate people by fear. I don't want anybody to be uncertain and I don't believe that anyone in our church sits in church saying well I wonder if I'm really saved. I want people to have an absolute assurance of salvation and I have no doubt, I have no question that I am born again and that I'm saved and if I die at this moment I'm going to be with the Lord but I also know and I also fear my flesh.

Because I know how powerful it is and I know that there is a potential that if I allow my flesh to dominate that my flesh could draw me away. And I think that if you're going to insert a word in there what was it that Jesus feared? I believe what he feared was the flesh. The weakness of the flesh.

Now the verse, the part of the verse that I've skipped over unto him who was able to save him from death. Him who was able to save him from death. Now obviously that's God, that's the Father.

But what does he mean that he was able to save him from death? Now some people say well you know there he was he was saying let this cup pass from me. In other words God you can save me from the death of the cross. And so Jesus was saying God save me from the death of the cross.

But the next part of the verse said and he was heard. Did God save him from the death of the cross? No. God heard his prayer, God answered his prayer.

So whatever it was that he was praying for he received it and therefore it could not be the death of the cross. Because he didn't receive an escape from that which is what he was asking for. It wasn't the resurrection.

There was something else that he was asking for. There was something else he was fearing that had to do with death. And at this point I'm going to go out on a limb.

Because I have no scripture for this. But this is the only way I can understand these scriptures. When Jesus was born he is born for what purpose? To die on the cross.

To die on the cross. To die that death that would make atonement for our sin. Shedding of his blood, the breaking of his body for our redemption.

That was the purpose of it all. Everything else was incidental. Do you think the devil knew what he had come for? Of course he did.

It's all there in the Old Testament. The devil knows the Old Testament. He knows the New Testament as much as you and I better than we do.

So he knew what God's plan was. He knew that Jesus had come to pay that price. And what could the devil do to stop the plan of God? Because this is what it's all about.

What could he do to stop the plan of God? Well he had a few options. The first option was the three that he exercised in the wilderness. The temptation for Jesus to build his kingdom on bread.

Which is exactly what preachers are doing today. Building the kingdom of God. On God's provision on money and giving and wealth.

To fall down from the temple. To jump down from the temple and the angels would rescue him. To build his kingdom on the spectacular.

Which is what other people are building the kingdom of trying to build the kingdom of God on. And then thirdly fall down and worship me. Compromise.

And I'll give you what you came for. All the kingdoms of the earth. So he tried to offer Jesus what? An alternative to the cross.

You see there is one thing that the devil was always afraid of and still is afraid of. And that is the cross. And so he did everything then and he continues to do everything now.

To remove the message of the cross from the gospel. To remove the cross from the church. And so he offers Jesus three alternatives to bypass the cross of Calvary.

And Jesus says I'm not going to go that way. I'm going to go God's way. He said his face is a flint to Jerusalem.

So now the devil has one other option. He has one more option. If Jesus is not going to compromise.

If he's not going to buy into some alternative to the cross. He has one other option. And that is to kill Jesus before he gets to the cross.

If he can kill Jesus before he gets to the cross. Then he can thwart the plan of God. Because it was important for Jesus to die that sacrificial death.

To be nailed to the cross. Cursed is everyone who hangs on the tree. And all of those scriptures that relate to the fact that the way here.

In the way that he had to die. Do you think the devil tried to kill Jesus? Yeah. When was the first time? When he was still a little baby.

Remember Herod sent out a command. Trying to kill Jesus. Remember at another time.

They tried to kick him. Push him over the cliff. What was it all about? I believe there was one plan behind all of those.

And that was to stop Jesus from getting to the purpose for which God had called him. And here's Jesus now the night before he is to be crucified. And he is saying.

I need to be saved from death. I fear the flesh. I fear the weakness of my flesh.

What was that about? And I submit to you the following possibility. That between that point. And Jesus paying the full price.

And being able to say it is finished. The devil was going to launch another attack on the life of Jesus. Trying to take him out before he could get there.

Or attempt to get him to sin. Those are the two possibilities left to the devil. Either kill Jesus.

Or get him to sin. As I said last night if he sinned. If he for one moment thought the wrong thought.

Thought the sort of vengeance. Or whatever. He would have failed.

He would have had to die for his own sin. And he would have no life to give for us. So here's the two temptations.

And so Jesus is examined. He's brought before Pilate. And Pilate delivers him to be scourged.

How many lashes did Jesus take? Careful. Not 39. Not 39.

I don't know how many. But the limit under the law, the Jewish law was 40 minus 1. But Jesus was not scourged under Jewish law. He was scourged under Roman law.

There was no limit. There was no limit. And the scourging was a death sentence in itself.

Many men died at that whipping post. And it was technically illegal for a man to be sentenced to the scourging and to the crucifixion. Because it was a double death sentence.

And do you think that the devil would have made sure that he got the biggest, most brutish Roman soldier to wield that whip that day? I'm sure he did. Because if he could kill Jesus at that whipping post, he could thwart the plan of God. And I believe that was what Jesus feared.

I don't believe he feared the cross. I don't believe he feared the pain. Remember, he was a man just like us.

There was no sense that he was relishing that, that he thought that that was a nice thing. Of course, he didn't want that, as far as a man was concerned. But he was so committed to doing the will of God, he said, I will do that.

But he also knew that there was a potential of him failing during that process. And he says, Father, you need to save me from death. You see, because Jesus had power that you and I don't have, but it was locked away.

He had willingly limited himself. And so you remember that they said to him, come down from the cross, call the angels. What was that about? Could he call angels? Yes, he could.

Could he come down from the cross? Yes, he could. But what would he have done? He would have failed in two points. He would have failed in that he had used his divine prerogative, his divine power when he was supposed to deal with these things as a man.

And secondly, he would have not have died and he would have failed. So there's that temptation. But there's another temptation.

There is a power that he had which you and I do not have. And that was the power to choose the moment of his death. Remember, Jesus says, no man takes my life from me.

I lay it down and I take it up again. So Jesus could choose when to die. And do you think that as that Roman soldier plowed the back of Jesus and went on and on and on, that the point did not come, that the thought did not cross his mind to just give up the ghost, to stop it, just to end it right there by expiring.

That was a possibility. That was something that he could do. And how far, what did he have to do to do it? He'd have to get three signatures on the check.

You'd have to unlock this door and unlock that door and then put two buttons, two fingers on the two buttons. No, it was like that. One thought, one thought and he would have been dead and he would have failed.

And folks, he's there being flogged. The scripture says he was marred more than any man. And yet every moment he is struggling with this temptation to just end it, to just stop it.

But he had prayed to him who was able to save him from death. And he was heard because of his fear. He said, Jesus recognized, I believe, the weakness of his flesh.

He recognized that if it was up to his humanity, the potential to do the wrong thing was so close. And yet he saw it through. He endured the cross.

He endured the cross. And so when he says that he's in every point tested and tempted like we are, I believe that Jesus went to the limit. I believe he was pushed to the very edge at that whipping post.

And you know, that was not the end yet. And there was still the cross. And everything that went with that cross.

And folks, one of the problems I have with these Jesus-type movies that try and graphically illustrate the pain, and there is no way that we can, I want to minimize the pain. The physical pain was real. And as I've just tried to describe, there was the potential of him giving up during that process.

But it can never begin like that. To be compared with the pain and the suffering that he endured as he who knew no sin became sin for us. That he took upon himself the guilt and the shame and the sin of the world.

And as his father turned away from him, and he cries, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And every step of the way, the temptation is there. Just to translate himself back into his divine position. He had that power.

He was all of God, locked up in that human form, battered and bruised upon that cross. And he could speak one word, and it could all end. And he could be back in heaven.

But he endured. He endured. He saw through.

And so when he calls for us and he says, now you need to endure. You need to endure hard times. You need to see through those temptations.

You need to make the right decisions when you want to do something and you know that God is asking you to do something different. You need to make those right decisions. Don't give in to the flesh.

Because Jesus did not give in to the flesh. He's not asking you or me to do something that he did not do. And folks, there are many times when I struggle with the will of God.

When I feel what God is asking me to do is unreasonable. And I'm just reminded of Jesus again. What God asked him to do and what he's asking me to do and what he's asking you to do are different things.

And what he's asking you to endure and to deal with is really, and I don't want to minimize your pain and your difficulty and your struggles and your temptation, but it cannot even begin to compare with what Jesus faced. And I'm just not a good enough preacher to be able to capture the intensity of what was happening at that whipping post and what happened in Gethsemane and that happened at the cross. But what I do understand is that I give in far too quickly.

I despair far too quickly. I give up far too quickly. God give me grace that I may come boldly to the throne of grace.

That I may obtain mercy and find grace to help in a time of need. That I may understand that I have come to a high priest who knows exactly what I'm enduring. Who knows exactly what I feel, but who endured.

And now is set down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Amen.

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