

Gethsemane

by Billy Sunday

Billy Sunday's sermon on Gethsemane highlights the agony of Christ and the urgent need for prayer and evangelism in the face of sin and the unsaved.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 7:7, Matthew 26:39, Mark 14:34, Luke 22:44, John 3:16, Romans 3:23, 1 Timothy 2:1-4, James 5:16, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "Power Of Prayer", "Agony of Christ"

Description

Billy Sunday preaches on the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, emphasizing the depth of His suffering and the significance of His prayer as He faced the bitter cup of humanity's sin. He challenges the notion that such physical manifestations of distress are impossible, using examples from history to illustrate that God can do the extraordinary. Sunday urges the congregation to recognize the seriousness of sin and the reality of hell, encouraging fervent prayer and deep concern for the souls of others. He highlights the power of prayer and the necessity of personal commitment to Christ, calling for a revival of genuine concern for the unsaved. Ultimately, he stresses that the hope of the world lies in Jesus Christ and the urgent need for believers to act in love and compassion towards those who are lost.

Transcript

"And being more in agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" -- Luke 22:24

Infidels have seized upon certain verses of Scripture and have given as reasons for their unbelief that the statement therein contained did not agree with their opinion. One of these verses is the one that I have just read - "and being in great agony, He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

For, says the infidel, it is a physical impossibility for men to sweat blood. This is a lot of nonsense. Because you have two good eyes, and have always known good sight, should you say there are no blind? They have never heard of such a thing happening, they say. All right; but because you say that man has never sweat blood, don't say that God didn't.

When I was a boy I used to hear men say that the Bible couldn't be true, for it was absolutely impossible for a man to fast for forty days and live. They thought that settled it. Then along came Doctor Tanner, and he fasted for forty days. That was the first time. He fasted again for forty-six days, and he fasted a third

time for sixty-two days, and after that we didn't bear any more about a fast of forty days being impossible. The infidels quit quoting Tom Paine's "Age of Reason" on that point.

When a man gets chesty and puts his old theories up against God, then God always brings a man forward to show that he is an old marplot and an old liar.

Doctor Witheroy, pastor of a Presbyterian church in Chicago - he went there from Boston - says he knew of a man who had a wayward son. He hadn't heard from that boy for nine years. Then, one day, they sent him word that his son was in prison. He had committed a murder, and he had been tried and convicted and was about to be executed. He had refused to tell anything about his family until he was face to face with death; then he told them and they wrote to the father to ask him what should be done with the body.

Doctor Witheroy said that in his agony that father sweat drops of blood. If an earthly father sweat drops of blood for one son who has just gone wrong, is it strange that Jesus should sweat drops of blood for all men when they were in danger of hell?

When Jesus sweat drops of blood there in the garden, it was a new sight for the angels. They had seen their brother angels rebel against God, and they had seen the conflict which followed and they had seen these rebel angels hurled over the battlements of Heaven. They had seen Sennacherib come up with his men, and they had seen 180,000 Assyrians laid low by the sword when the angel of God smote them in the night. They had seen Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego cast into a fiery furnace for refusing to bow themselves down to idols, and had seen them come out from it unharmed. They had seen the brave Daniel hurled into the lion's den for refusing to bow the knee to anyone save Jehovah, and they had seen him come out from the den of wild beasts alive. But never before had the angels beheld such a sight as when they looked down upon the garden of Gethsemane and saw the son of God kneeling there, sweating drops of blood as He agonized over man.

In this text there are many lessons valuable to us, and especially valuable just at this stage of the campaign.

The first lesson is that the Divine cup is bitter. It is bitter to fallen angels and fallen man, and it was bitter to the fallen Christ. Think of the sight. Think of Jesus, staining his garments with the bloody sweat, not because of any sin or fault of his own, for He was without sin, but because of His anguish over man.

God hates sin and so do I, so will every man on this earth who lays any claim to decency. If you don't hate sin you will if you ever change your ways and try to be decent.

He didn't sweat those drops of blood because of any physical suffering. It wasn't because of any fear of death, for if Jesus had been afraid to die He would have been a coward, and He wasn't a coward, although He was willing to die if God said to. I don't want to die. I want to stay here as long as I can. And so did Jesus, but He wasn't afraid to die. No. It was because of His grief for man.

A great martyr said as he stood in the midst of the flames that were devouring him: "Though you see the flesh fall from my bones I absolutely feel no pain."

If you ever had any doubt about a literal Hell, a fiery Hell, where the wicked must remain forever, it would all vanish as I see Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, agonizing because men would not accept Him and were going to Hell.

Hell must be an awful place. The fact that God went to the trouble He did to send Jesus Christ to this earth and to work out His great plan of redemption proves that it must be an awful place. I think this should give us a new vision.

Yes, it was a bitter cup for Jesus. Oh, don't be careless professors of Christianity for another minutes. Don't you start to make a cold, formal prayer when you come to address Almighty God! Don't you dare to regard this Campaign in a critical and carping way. Oh, Hell must be an awful place when Jesus was in such agony to think that men were going there. You're a big fool to go to Hell, but it will be your own fault if you do. God doesn't want you to go there, but He can't stop you. He has sacrificed His son to keep you out of Hell, and what more could He do? I am doing all I can to keep you out of Hell. I have stood here and preached to you and I've done all that I could, and if you won't be saved, all right -- go to Hell.

When Jesus was being led out to be sacrificed women followed Him and wept, and He turned to them and said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." For He said, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Jesus meant that they shouldn't weep for Him, but for those who were about to crucify Him; He meant that there were more reasons to weep for them than to weep for Him.

So don't weep for others' troubles; weep for your own soul. Don't worry about my vocabulary, sister; get on your knees and pray for your salvation, Don't worry about my eccentricities; you'd better look after your own faults.

We learn still another lesson - the power of prayer.

Every man and every woman that God has used to halt this sin cursed world and set it going Godward has been a Christian of prayer. Martin Luther arose from his bed and prayed at night, and when the break of day came he called his wife and said to her, "It has come." History records that on that very day King Charles granted religious toleration, a thing for which Luther had prayed.

John Knox, whom his queen feared more than any other man, was in such agony of prayer that he ran out into the street and fell on his face and cried, "Oh, God, give me Scotland or I'll die." And God gave him Scotland, and not only that, He threw England in for good measure.

When Jonathan Edwards was about to preach his greatest sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," he prayed for days- and when he stood before his congregation and preached it, men caught at the seat in their terror, and some fell to the floor; and the people cited out in their fear, "Mr. Edwards, tell us how we can be saved!"

I believe that if you will pray as you ought to pray, you will have more people at the altar in the next week than you have had in all the weeks that are passed. You have never had the people of this community in such a frame of mind as they are in now, and you may never have things as they now are again. Now is the time to save souls. If you can't save them now, God pity you, for you never will.

An old infidel - a blacksmith - said that he could refute any argument that a Christian could make. There was an old deacon there - he was a Baptist, and he heard of it. He told his wife and they got down on their knees and prayed until 3 o'clock in the morning. That morning the old deacon hitched up and drove over to see the man. He went into the blacksmith shop and the infidel was standing there, and the deacon stood before him. He said, "My wife and I prayed for you until 3 o'clock this morning." Then his eyes filled with

tears and he sobbed and turned away. He couldn't think of one of the arguments he had prepared. He drove back home, and when he got there he said to his wife, "I've made an old fool of myself. It was all for nothing. When I saw him I just told him that we had been praying for him, then I broke down and couldn't think of another thing, and came home".

In the meantime the infidel went into his own house and he said to his wife: "I heard a new argument this morning." She said, "What was that?" "Why," he said, "the old deacon drove in to see me this morning and told me that he and his wife had prayed for me until 3 o'clock in the morning. Then he sobbed and went away." And the infidel said, "I'd like to talk to him." They drove over and he told the deacon why he had come, and it was not long before the deacon had him on his knees and he was saved.

A mother had some daughters, and they were frivolous and coquettish girls. She couldn't get them to give up their pleasures and live for God. She prayed for them, and finally one day she said to them: "I'm ashamed of you. I'm almost sorry that I bore you and held you on my knees. You care more for others than you do for your God or your mother. Others ask you to go with them, and you go. I ask you to go with me, and you won't go. I'm going into my closet and I'm going to pray for you, I don't know that I shall ever come out alive."

She went in and prayed. The hours went by and still she prayed. Finally there was a knock at the door, and one of her daughters stood there. She was weeping, and she said, "Mother, I want to be saved. I've come to pray with you." So the two of them prayed and the hours went by, and presently another daughter came and joined them there; and before night came all those girls had found Jesus.

Then, we learn a lesson of the spirit of deep concern over soul.

The spirit of concern that we find in the Bible puts to shame many who are in Omaha. Some of you have been coming to this tabernacle ever since the meetings were begun, but you have simply sat here. You haven't put forth a hand to bring anyone to Christ. If you are one of these, you are absolutely worthless so far as God is concerned. You are of no use to him and he looks on you as an unprofitable servant. How can you sit by while souls are going to Hell? What are you going to say to God about it after a while? Go and see an unsaved person die, and read the obituary not once, but twice, and realize that he died unsaved, and then see what you think of it!

Someone may say, "How do I know how God feels about it?" How do I know whether he is really concerned over sinners? I know it. It would be a sin of presumption if I did not. If God cared as little for the souls of men as some of you care, not a soul ever would have been saved - it is not possible for the human mind to have a greater conception of God than is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. For a man to say he loves God and then turn his back on Jesus Christ is an insult to the Almighty. You will find in Him just what your heart has been looking for, and you'll find it nowhere else.

I can see Jesus in the Garden looking down on Jerusalem and saying, "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stoned them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." It is a matter of history that from that day Jesus turned away from the Jews. He never appealed to them again, but turned to the Gentiles - but God's got a plan for the Jews. So Jesus is God made manifest in the flesh.

Did you ever weep over the sins of the people? Did you ever weep over the evil of the multitude? If you never did then there's something wrong with your religion. If God Almighty had no more concern about the

salvation of Omaha than some of you, Omaha would have been in Hell long ago. If God were no more anxious about Omaha than some of the preachers I could name, this city would have been damned long ago. I've been here long enough to see that.

Salvation all comes through Jesus. You've got to see Jesus in order to see God, and you've got to see God in order to enter Heaven. The hope of the world is in Jesus Christ. The hope of America is in Christ, not in free trade; it's not in the banking system, it's not in tariff reform, or conservation of natural resources or the ship problem or universities. We need a great tidal wave of religion.

One time I found a little boy in the street. After that boy had been restored to his mother, I found that the mother had been frantic for his return. She could not do enough to show her appreciation. It opened my eyes and I said, "God, I know how you feel about all this unsaved world, for I know how that mother felt over that little lost boy."

Another lesson we find is that much concern moves the unsaved for God.

Much concern is aroused by prayer. Doctor Chapman told me that when he was a young minister and was pastor of a little Dutch Presbyterian church in New York state, he started what he called a Revival. He told me that he had often apologized to God since then for calling it that. He would preach, and then he would say, "If anyone would like to join the Church, let them step in and meet the session." If that isn't as cold-blooded a proposition as you can find, I'll give it up. Nobody stepped in to meet the session. They didn't believe in excitement in the church. No, sir. If anybody wanted to join he could step in and meet the session.

Doctor Chapman became concerned for one young man. He felt that he ought to speak for him, but he feared that he might show more zeal than knowledge. He felt the man might be offended if he went to him in that way. He had the wrong idea. If anyone is offended because you try to do right, let them go, if anyone is offended because you ask them to be a Christian, let them go to Hell. You've done your duty. He thought it over and made up his mind to speak that very night. The young man did not come that night, so on the next day Doctor Chapman drove out in a cutter to see him. He met the man and said, "I want you to be a Christian."

The man was angry. He said, "You blankety-blank little preacher, I don't want you to come to me about that." Doctor Chapman turned and left him and drove away. He caught cold while driving out there and it stayed with him that winter, and soon after he left the place and took up Evangelistic work.

One night ten years after, he was holding a meeting at Saratoga, when he saw a man coming down the aisle.

"Don't you know me?" the man asked. Doctor Chapman didn't know him.

"Why," the man said, "I'm Benedict from Schuylerville. I'm the man who cursed you when you drove out to my home and asked me to be a Christian. I want to be a Christian now."

"What has changed you?" Doctor Chapman asked.

"I'll tell you," said the man. "I never heard a sermon that touched me, nor a song. It was your tears, the tears that were in your eyes as I cursed you and you turned away. I've never been able to forget them. I've never had a day's peace since that moment."

Oh, if you knew the power of tears for the sinner. If you only felt enough concern to weep over those who are in danger of being lost. The sight of such tears would win many souls for Christ.

One morning when I was over in Iowa a young woman came to my door and knocked and said that a man wanted to see me. I found that he was a Church member - a ruling elder. He told me that he had not been living right. "How can I get right?" he asked.

I told him that his confession must be as public as his sin had been great. I told him that he would have to stand up and tell the people that he hadn't been living right and promise that with God's help he would do better. He said, "Oh, I can't do that."

"All right," I said, "but if you aren't willing to do what you must do to get right, what did you come to me for?"

He finally said he would do it, and he did. Then he asked me to pray for him and I did. Then he asked me to pray for his son Ernest, and I prayed for him at intervals that day. The boy was at Shenandoah, that was in western Iowa - going to school. He didn't go with his class that day. Late that night there was a knock at the door and when they opened it, Ernest was there. He had walked sixteen or seventeen miles to get home and he was almost frozen.

"What's wrong?" the father asked.

"Oh, father, I'm an awful sinner," said the boy.

They called his mother and they got him warm. Today he is preaching the gospel to the heathen. God shot the arrow of conviction over fifteen miles that day in answer to our prayers.

If the Church people get right, the whole world will get right. The world is challenging the Church instead of the Church challenging the world. If it was as easy to get the Church on its knees as it is to get the unsaved world into the kingdom, we wouldn't have any more trouble about religion. And God can't save you unless you're willing. He won't coerce you to it.

I often think of what Bob Ingersoll might have been if he had only been turned into Christianity. What a power for God that man could have been!

I often think of what a power Voltaire could have been for God - that brilliant man over whose writings many have stumbled to Hell.

Carey translated the Bible into twenty-four languages and dialects.

Finney brought over 1,000,000 into the Kingdom of God.

Moody brought hundreds of thousands to Christ.

I have never seen a minister who preached doctrines and creeds and evolution and all such things who had any real concern for the souls of his people. Jesus Christ is in a hurry to save this world and there never was an age when people were so hungry for the truth as they are today.

The angels don't care anything about a railroad in Alaska. What do the angels care about political principles? What do they care about a forty story skyscraper or reclaiming the deserts of the west? What

do they care about pictures, art or science? The only thing they're interested in is the salvation of man. If you want to make the bells of Heaven ring, get down on your knees. Tell a sinner about Jesus Christ if you want to hear the Heavenly bells. Nothing will swing open the prison doors and bring men out of sin like prayer.

I never see a man or a woman or boy or girl but I do not think that God has a plan for them, and wonder what it is. He has a plan for each of us. He will use each of us to His glory if we will only let Him. We can defeat His plan if we want to.

Finally, we find that God honors this spirit in deep concern for the unsaved. This concern comes from a clear realization of man's relation. I never knew a higher critical preacher to save them from Hell. Such preaching is not of God and He will not bless it. It is of the devil. If you haven't got in your heart an agonized concern for the unsaved go right down there in front and fall in the sawdust and ask God to forgive you.

Nothing makes such joy in Heaven as the salvation of a soul. The angels don't care a rap about your wealth; they don't care about your social position, they don't care about your culture. It's the salvation of sinners the angels care about.

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