

The Agony of Gethsemane

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sermon emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God's will and not loving the world, using the stories of Demas and Peter to illustrate this point.

Duration: 54:28

Scripture: Matthew 26:31-46, Luke 22:42, John 15:5, Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Philippians 2:5, Colossians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:10, Hebrews 12:1-2, 1 John 2:15-17

Topics: "Gethsemane", "Spiritual Struggle"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the significance of Gethsemane as a place of spiritual struggle and transformation, urging believers to confront their inner battles rather than escape them. He draws parallels between the story of Demas, who forsook Paul for worldly desires, and the disciples' failure to stay awake and support Jesus in His hour of need. The sermon highlights the necessity of prayer and surrender to God's will during times of pressure, illustrating that true strength comes from relying on Christ rather than our own abilities. Beach encourages the congregation to embrace the 'oil press' of Gethsemane, where the soul is crushed to yield spiritual fruit, and to resist the temptation to seek comfort in worldly distractions.

Transcript

Obviously, a very clear word that the Lord is bringing forth this morning into our hearts. And it's very encouraging as it confirms something the Lord dropped into my spirit this morning, or actually not this morning, confirmed this morning for several days. As you know, we began a message a number of weeks ago on seven deadly sins that every Christian should hate.

But a few days ago, the Lord started dropping another word into my spirit. And so I was before him in regard to what it is that he wanted to share. And just this morning and yesterday, I felt clear from the Lord to just lay the seven deadly sins aside again and just mind the Lord.

And now everything that has come forth this morning has strongly supported and confirmed. So it's very, very important that we hear what the Holy Spirit is saying to us. That God is speaking to us in a very clear way, wanting us to hear his heart, I would like to begin by turning your attention to 2nd Timothy, chapter four, 2nd Timothy, chapter four.

A number of days ago, when the Lord began to birth into my spirit, a message for you and I today, he began by saying in my spirit so wonderfully and it brought tears to my eyes. The Lord just began to show me by saying, I long. For those who will come.

And tarry with me at Gethsemane, we're going to look into that this morning, the Lord is calling from our ranks here who will come with the Lord and tarry with him in Gethsemane, 2nd Timothy, chapter four, beginning in verse number 10, for Demas. Having loved or I'm sorry, for Demas hath forsaken me. Having loved this present world and is departed unto Thessalonica.

Now, in Colossians, chapter four, verse 14. Paul indicated that Demas was one of those who were, who was traveling with him, who greeted the church. And Colossi, he said, Luke, the physician greets you and Demas also greets you.

Demas was a companion with Paul, sat under the incredible teachings of Paul and most likely the teachings of other apostles and teachers in the New Testament setting. He visited, no doubt, many, many different churches and fellowshipped among many different Christians, different cultures. He had quite probably, he had quite a, an accumulation of experience.

I would suppose that if Demas came into the 20th century, the 21st century that we're standing on the threshold of and had the mindset of the nominal Christian, he would put together a resume and if he was like most Christians, no, I don't believe that's an exaggeration. He would probably hunt down the big churches in the cities and he would place his resume within the hands of those men who make the decisions. And perhaps his resume would say something like Demas saved 50 A.D., 40 A.D., six months later, came into mentorship with the apostle Paul, sat under his ministry, traveled with him to various churches in Asia Minor, met Paul or Peter the apostle, had dinner with him and his wife, often prayed in the meetings and at times was invited by Paul the apostle to share what was on his heart.

A number of people came to the Lord under my ministry, very experienced in altar work. Many times after Paul preached, multitudes responded and I was able to pray for the sick and they were healed and I was able to pray for some to get the baptism and they received it and they spoke in tongues. And I ministered to the couples and the singles and frequently while Paul was preaching, he mentioned me as one of his right hand workers.

Quite impressive, wouldn't you say? Quite impressive. Very few churches would consider him not qualified. And I'm sure within a short time he would get a lot of phone calls from a lot of interested pastors.

This guy is good for the church. But there was something lurking within the heart of Demas that perhaps very few Christians saw. And though he had a very impressive resume, the Holy Spirit speaks through perhaps the shaking hand of Paul because Paul, while he wrote this epistle, was aged.

He was up in age. He was about to be offered. Second Timothy was almost a farewell epistle.

The Holy Spirit indicates that this man, Demas, who had an impressive resume and much experience, loved this present world. And because he loved this present world, he forsook Paul and he went to Thessalonica. Now, we don't know what he did in Thessalonica.

He could have ended up ministering among local believers. He could have accepted some kind of ministry. I'm sure he continued, quote unquote, to go to church.

I'm sure he continued outwardly to be engaged in what Christianity was doing back in this day. But in spite of everything that Demas was doing in Thessalonica, these words were reverberating in the Spirit. They were reverberating from the heart of God.

Now, whether or not Demas ever recovered inwardly from this great fall, we don't know. But one thing we do know, he traveled with Paul. He had great experience in ministry.

He was associated with those who were very highly esteemed in the church. And yet at this time in Paul's life, his words toward Demas were those of great sorrow. He forsook Paul.

He loved this present age and he went to Thessalonica. Demas is taken by the Holy Spirit in this particular portion of Scripture. And in Demas, God captures a picture of a very, very subtle but sorrowful condition that the Lord's people can fall into.

Demas represents the Christian who starts out doing well. Demas represents the Christian who finds him or herself in the environment of good spiritual teaching. Demas represents the Christian who not only experiences good teaching, but also is able to travel and to minister among other Christians.

Demas represents the Christian who always seems to be there and always seems to be doing well. But Demas also represents the Christian who forsakes the Lord. You say, well, the Bible doesn't say he forsook the Lord.

It says he forsook Paul. He forsook Paul because he loved this present world. Therefore, his forsaking was springing out of a forsaking of the Lord.

Now, in 1 John 2, verse 15, listen carefully. It said of Demas that he forsook Paul because he loved this present world. And now verse 15 of 1 John chapter 2 says, love not the world.

That's the very reason why the Bible says not to love the world. Because as we love the world, we forsake the Lord. Now, remember, it doesn't mean that we cease from looking religious.

We don't know when this began to happen in Demas's life. But there was a time when he was very much involved in Christian activity and Christian ministry, sitting under great teachers and preachers. Yet, who knows if this leaven was working in his life? We don't know.

But we do know that the Bible says, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

These, listen carefully, these three elements of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, correspond to something inherently within our own sinful selves. That's why the world is such a dangerous place. Because the world and all of the lust of the flesh that the world is arrayed with, and all of the lust of the eyes, the things that appeal to the eye, the things that appeal to the flesh, and the pride of life, those things are so dangerous because they are an external manifestation of the things inherently latent within the soul.

The Bible says in verse 17, and the world passes away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. And so therefore, there is that which is in us, that is working in us, that is enticed by these three things that are in the world because they correspond one to another. The fashion, the outward

fashion of this world with all of its hype and all of its glamour and all of its voluptuous allurements simply corresponds to the thing that lies within the sinful human heart.

And therefore, Demas, though he was exposed to the greatest teachings, fell into a crisis and forsook Paul and what Paul represented, which was the full commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ. And he forsook Paul and went to Thessalonica all because he was loving this present world. That is, there was that which was working in Demas that he was not willing to lay down to death so that Demas could fulfill the whole will of God.

Now, that brings us to Matthew chapter 26. You'll remember in Matthew chapter 26, beginning in verse number 31, we read the most familiar portion of Scripture regarding Peter and his denial of the Lord Jesus. All right.

Now, keep in mind the story of Demas and remember what Jesus actually said to his disciples in verse number 40, could you not watch with me one hour? And so when the Lord spoke those words to me, I desire for people, my people, those who are called by my name, I desire them to come and tarry with me in Gethsemane. It's really the words he spoke as a man to his own apostles, to his own disciples. So remember the connection between Demas and what happened to him and the story that we're about to read.

Because there's a vital connection. Might I say without getting ahead of myself that unless we understand the principle of Gethsemane, we will in fact do the same thing that Demas did. We will do the same thing that Peter did that we're about to read.

The reason we will is because it is inevitable that we will fail the Lord until we have learned that all important lesson of living our strength from the life of another and not from our own selves. Verse number 31. Listen carefully.

Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. And after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of you, yet will I never be offended. Is it possible that Demas said the same thing at one time in his heart while traveling with Paul and seeing how oftentimes people would misunderstand Paul and forsake Paul? Perhaps Demas heard about the fact that Paul had been stoned a number of times. Perhaps he heard about the fact that he had to be lowered down in a basket in Damascus and delivered out of the city because men were seeking his life.

Perhaps he heard about the stonings. Perhaps he was an eyewitness to some. And do you think maybe Demas said at one time in his life, Though all men forsake this dear brother of God, I'm not going to forsake Him because I know that Jesus Christ appeared to him and I know that Jesus has called Him to be one of His chosen apostles and I'm going to stick right by His side and serve Him.

Do you think maybe Demas said that? It's possible. We don't know, but it's possible. Verse 34, Jesus said, Verily I say unto thee, This night before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice.

Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all of the disciples. How many times have we said that? I'm not going to deny the Lord.

This time I'm going to do it. This time I'm going to do it. And yet what happens? We deny Him.

We fail Him. Let's understand why. I don't think it's at all coincidental that the Holy Spirit inspires Matthew to go from the great denial of Peter to the fellowship in Gethsemane.

I don't believe there is in any way coincidence here. I believe that the Holy Spirit is revealing to us in the subsequent verses of Peter's denial the very reason why Peter denied the Lord. But now remember, Peter eventually was willing to be crucified upside down for Jesus Christ, according to Josephus, the church historian.

And so obviously the thing that was wrong with Peter at this time, God made it right. So there's hope. Don't want to paint a negative picture, but neither do I want to minimize the need for us to recognize our essential problem.

And then we can believe God to deal with it and not get discouraged while He's dealing with it. Okay, now listen carefully. Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane.

Now before we go on, the word Gethsemane literally means oil press. Now what's the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear oil press? Crushing, squeezing, pressure, pain. Jesus liked to hang out at Gethsemane.

Did you know that? He often went there and prayed. There's a reason why. Because Gethsemane represented Christ's destiny.

And His face was set as a flint toward the spiritual principle of what Gethsemane represented. Gethsemane represented to Jesus the place where He was going to entirely lay His life down in death, in total dependence upon His Father, not seeking to save Himself from any of the will of God, knowing that it was only through going into the will of God and lying down in death that He would come up in the resurrection and in the life and in pleasing His Father 100%. There was a strange divine attraction that Jesus Christ had for death.

And beloved, we need in this late hour that we are living in this divine attraction for death so that we can have something to combat our natural reaction to death, which is, I don't want it. And you'll find that even Jesus had that reaction as we read. Verse 36, Sit ye here while I go and pray under.

And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Gethsemane is a place of sorrow and heaviness. Some of us are experiencing in principle a Gethsemane, an oil press, a place of pressure.

And during that time, it is normal to feel sorrow. It is normal to feel heaviness. Even Peter said, Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that shall try you, as though some strange thing is happening to you.

And he says in another place, Don't be discouraged if need be, you must be going through a season of heaviness. Heaviness is part of the Lord's process of crushing us that the life of Jesus Christ might be released in full abundance. The Bible says that Jesus began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

Then said He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Tarry ye here and watch with me. Jesus was in the oil press of God's dealing.

Jesus was in the oil press of the Father's will. And the Father's will was that Jesus would be willing, Jesus would cooperate with the will of His Father to the point where He would go into death. He would literally go into death physically, but now He was wrestling with a battle in His soul over the death of His soul.

The dying of His soul was the walk of God, though He was without sin, yet He had to be subject to a condition where His soul had to willingly lay itself at the feet of God and there naked, in dependence upon God, believe God to rescue Him out from this inevitable cup that He was about to drink. The cup of judgment. The cup of becoming the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Beloved, He was a man. He felt the pain. He felt it.

He knew that nobody was standing with Him. He knew that everybody had forsaken Him. Don't you think for a minute His soul wasn't feeling the pain of Gethsemane.

Don't think for a minute that He wasn't feeling the utter darkness of the inevitable cup. Before physically, He was able to lie on the cross and say it is finished. Inwardly, He had to accept that death.

Inwardly, His soul had to be tested and hallelujah, it was found to be true through and through. His soul was found to be without sin. His soul was found, though it was sorrowful, and though it was in pain, and though, verse 42, it even expressed itself in this way, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, Thy will be done.

In another place it says, if it is possible for this cup to pass from me, so be it. Nevertheless, not my will but Thy will be done. So we see inherent within the sinless soul of the Son of God the springing of a thought, if it is possible for this cup to pass from me.

And by this we see a most comforting truth. It is not abnormal or wrong or sinful when we are in the oil press of God's dealing in our life to come to the Lord and say, Lord, I am sorrowful. I am filled with grief and pain.

My soul feels like it's going to die. Is it possible that there's another way for you to do what you've got to do in my life? It's not wrong to feel these feelings. Jesus Himself felt them because He was a man.

He was without sin, but He was a man. And the thing that made Him so lovely is He said, nevertheless, not my will, but Your will be done. And if that means enduring this thing to the end and dying and becoming a sin sacrifice, so be it.

That's the quality within the soul of the Son of God that you and I need. Because apart from Him, our soul will cry out, I don't want this and I'm not going to accept it. But the sinless soul of the Son of God said, Lord, I feel pain.

I feel anguish. My disciples are sleeping. No one is standing with me.

Sounds like a good time for a pity party, doesn't it? We throw a pity party when we're in that situation, don't we? Woe is me. Nobody cares. Nobody sees.

Nobody understands what I'm going through. But Jesus said, Father, though I feel this pain, here's the difference between the blessed Son of God and His own children. The difference is in the midst of that soul of His having to go down into death, He says, nevertheless, not my will, but Thy will be done.

And that's what He wants to give to you and I. That ability in the midst of our personal Gethsemane, in the midst of that time in our life when God puts us in the oil press and crushes us, crushes our desires, crushes the soul so that the soul is broken before God, not destroyed, but broken, pliable, where the soul is not exerting itself above God, exerting its own way, exerting its own desires, exerting its own lusts. Remember, love not the things that are in this world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. That is the sin principle that's in the soul.

And until the soul is broken by God and crushed, then our life, for the most part, will be governed by those desires, those soulical, sinful desires. We will seek to save our soulless life. We will seek to save the things in us that God wants us to lay down at His feet.

And so Jesus came to the place where He was willing to accept the death of His very soul. And in dying, He made a way for all of us to be free from sin. And now you and I are invited to follow Him and allow Him to crush and to break us so that we can be free from those things that are not pleasing in His eyes and be filled with His love, filled with His mercy, filled with His beauty.

The oil press. Is there an attraction in our hearts for the oil press? By nature, we don't want it. We want the good life, don't we? We want everybody to love us, everybody to accept us, everyone to do it our way.

We want everything to be nice and neat and comfortable. But God loves us too much to let that happen. And so what He does is He comes and He interrupts our life.

He interrupts our plans. He interrupts our dreams. And He lets us feel pain and sorrow.

He lets us taste the defeat of failure. And our life suddenly begins to feel like it's out of control. How many have ever felt like you are out of control? You no longer have a hold on your life.

It's not going the way you want. Why? Why is it happening? Because there's a God in heaven who loves you. And He is persistently seeking to bring your soul into a posture where it gives up.

Not destroyed, but gives up. So that it will not exert itself against the will of God. So the most important thing in your life is not the fulfilling of your own desires, but the fulfilling of God's will for your life.

God is not against you, He's for you. But He will not let you do your own thing. And so when He intervenes and frustrates and causes pain, it's because He is wanting you to come to say, Father, your will is the thing I must be after.

That's what He's doing. God knows that we are earthly creatures. And that left to ourself, we would end up following the very impulses in us that are not like the Lord.

And so He works on us. And He does it in Gethsemane. But many times like the apostles, when God brings us to Gethsemane, what do we do? We sleep.

We're overcome by the heaviness of the moment. We sleep. And we do not discern the season that is upon us.

Now, let me tell you what we do in Gethsemane, while we're sleeping. This goes back to the exhortation I shared earlier. It is during the time when we are in Gethsemane that we dream.

And we dream about the way it could be if things were different. We dream about what it would be like if things were different. I recently spoke to a person long distance who indicated how they had become so frustrated with their spouse.

So frustrated with their spouse that this particular person had given many days over to fantasizing about what it would be like if they were married to someone else. Someone who cared. Someone who loved me.

Someone who was everything I wanted them to be. And this person was not able to realize that the pain and the sorrow and the depths of anxiety that they were going through was God's ordained Gethsemane form. To there find the grace to die to those selfish desires that were rising up because of what the spouse was doing.

All the attention was on, it's the other one's fault, the other one's fault, the other one's fault. But couldn't see the hatred and the bitterness that was gripping their own heart. Couldn't see the depths because when God brought this person to Gethsemane for the crushing of the soul, for the relinquishing of those desires, they fell asleep.

And they dreamed about the perfect spouse. They dreamed about the perfect environment. They dreamed about the perfect Shangri-La, the euphoria.

And that dreaming gave way to a decision that almost was carried out divorce. When we dream in Gethsemane, we become vulnerable and susceptible to the powers of darkness who intend to drive us from the Gethsemane so that God's ultimate intention doesn't happen. God's intention in Gethsemane is like we see in Jesus.

The soul delivered to death. And there, helplessly, glory to God for that word, helplessly naked before God, committing the welfare of its being to God alone. My God, what a place to be! Stripped from self-preservation.

Stripped from retaliation. Stripped from evil thinking. Stripped from taking things into our own hands.

Stripped! And there, actively looking to God alone for its comfort in pain, for its love in hatred. And as Alan mentioned earlier, there's nothing greater that the enemy is doing in the church today than to drive the Lord's people from Gethsemane. Because that's the place where the soul is truly transformed into the likeness of Christ.

And so that's where the grass is greener on the other side, revelation comes. You ever been there? You ever look at the grass? You ever look in someone else's backyard and say, now if I only had it like them? Let me assure you most solemnly in the love of God and by the Spirit of God that that is an illusion. It's not true.

And that if God gave you, and He might, because sometimes He allows us to lay hold of the dreams that we dream when we should be praying with Jesus so that our soul can be delivered to death. We should be doing that, but we're not. And sometimes Jesus wakes us up and says, alright, have at it.

Do what you want. And I assure you most solemnly that if God gives you the desire of that dream that you dream in Gethsemane, it is not going to be the way you think. Oh, Brother Beach, you don't know.

I'm telling you, I can taste it. Well, what you taste as sweet now will turn bitter in your belly. And what looks... ..quick version and then we're closing.

Just about how things don't look the way they appear. Now, I might not tell it exactly the way it's been told to me. You might know a different version, but bear with me because it's the truth of the matter that matters.

A particular man had a problem with lust, a problem with adultery. It was in his heart, but he hadn't been dealing with it. He was swimming and he saw across the lake or at some distance in the water the form of what appeared to be a naked woman.

And he became very excited at the thought of it. I'm going to use discretion because I realize we have ears in here that are young. And so nevertheless, he swam underwater and suddenly this desire was released and he just imagined he should have fell on his knees at that garden of Gethsemane and prayed, God, deliver my soul to death.

But no, he fantasized and he started swimming and he went and he went and he just, all this buildup within him of what he imagined it was going to be like. And he was underwater swimming and swimming and all of a sudden he realized he was just about a potter and he looked up and there he looked and he shuddered with fear and he couldn't believe it. He beheld a woman that was stricken with leprosy and she was ugly and every part of her body was deformed.

And in shame and humiliation, he quietly turned and started to swim away. And the spirit of prophecy, I believe, would speak to each one of us. So shall it be with you and I if we follow after that and we pursue that which is nothing more than the dream of our heart, which is nothing more than Satan's way out of dying.

It might appear to be something that looks good, but when you come up to it face to face, it will be dreadful. Why does the Lord speak to us like this? Is He angry? Exact opposite. He's so in love with us.

He is so desirous for our undivided, undistracted love that He must do this. Because if He doesn't do this, we wouldn't be preserved from our own self. So don't be discouraged at the Lord's dealings in your life, beloved.

Don't be discouraged at the severity of God's hand. But just look to Jesus. Recognize it's His work.

And realize that Gethsemane is a painful place. Don't condemn yourself because of the pain you're feeling. Don't feel like it's bad because you've prayed, Lord, is there another way? But don't stop there.

Say, Lord, give me in my soul what was in Yours. The finishing sentence, nevertheless, if there is no other way, and if it must be this way, then I accept it, Lord. By Your grace, I accept it, Lord.

I do not want to dream in the garden of Gethsemane and the terror of You letting me follow my dreams, I know will turn out to be like that man who saw the leprosy. I know it, Lord. Keep me.

Keep me, Lord, in this hour of testing. I have failed. I have dreamed.

Maybe some of us now are even pursuing those dreams. And we realize maybe God was dealing with me back then. And I see now that I rebelled and I made a way of escape.

Don't despair. Don't despair. Come to God right now and tell Him.

Say, Lord, I'm willing now by Your grace to let You have Your full way in my life and believe that God is even able to take the bad and turn it for Your good if You'll acknowledge today Your need for Him. Believe God to do it. My closing words, verse 40.

This addresses you and I who are in the garden of Gethsemane. Hear these words, beloved. They are prophetic.

And He cometh to the disciples and found them asleep. Oh, we sleep during these times. You know why we sleep? Because sleeping takes the pain away, doesn't it? Did you ever feel like, oh, if I can just get to sleep? I've been there so many times.

I don't know how many times. God, if I can just fall asleep now and forget about this, I'll be happy. That's why we sleep.

Because the pain is gone. We don't have to battle. But here's what Jesus said.

He found them asleep and He said, What? Could ye not watch with Me one hour? Jesus has not called us to sleep in the garden. He's called us to watch. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

What's the temptation? What's the trial in the midst of the oil press? The temptation is to say, I am not going to let this happen. I'm going to take control of this situation. I'm going to drink.

I'm going to smoke. Demas said, I'm leaving, Paul. I don't like what's going on.

I'm going to Thessalonica. What have you done? What have you done today? That has been your way of saying, No, Lord, I'm not going to let this happen. My soul is in too much pain.

I'm going to preserve my life. I'm going to save my life. Here's what Jesus says.

Pray ye enter not into that temptation. The Spirit indeed is willing. If God is working in you, there is a sense of willingness to do God's will.

But remember the words of Jesus, but the flesh is weak. The flesh, that word means without power. So while there might be a willingness in you to do the will of God, and in context, this is talking about the death of the soul.

There is a weakness in you that without prayer, without the strengthening of God, will overcome your willingness to do God's will. That's right. There is a weakness inherent within the flesh that will overcome your desire to do God's will, unless your desire to do God's will is continuously strengthened and energized by the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and you are increasingly strengthened by God.

That's why Jesus said, Pray a visit to Gethsemane. Father, thank you for your faithfulness this morning. Each and every one of us acknowledge our need.

We have heard your word in our spirits. We can't add to them or take from them. All we can say, Lord, is have mercy.

It is your work. We look to you to perfect what you have begun. Father, I'm asking you to give us understanding in these matters, and the dreams that we dream while sleeping in Gethsemane, wake us up

from them, Lord.

Help us to see that this pain will bring about a harvest of your life and love and righteousness far exceeding what we could ever imagine. Lord, only you have the power we ask for it through you. In Jesus name.

Amen.

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