

The Three Prayers (Part 4)

by Ron Bailey

In this sermon, Ron Bailey explores the profound emotional and spiritual significance of Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane as He faces His impending sacrifice.

Duration: 1:09:51

Scripture: Isaiah 4:4, Zechariah 13:4, Matthew 3:11, Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:7-8, Mark 14:27, Luke 3:16

Topics: "Prayer Example"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Isaiah and his encounter with God's judgment upon Babylon. Isaiah is overwhelmed with fear as he witnesses the destruction that will befall the city. The speaker draws parallels between Isaiah's experience and the book of Revelation, emphasizing the significance of Babylon's fall. The sermon also highlights the sacrificial love of God, as demonstrated through the giving of His only Son for the salvation of humanity. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the importance of recognizing Jesus as either crucified or crowned, with no other options available.

Transcript

Good morning everyone. I am subdued this morning, I've spent the morning in Gethsemane. And that's where I want to take you.

And if there's any part of the Scripture that really is a holy of holies, I think it's Gethsemane. I can tell you I don't actually like going to these passages of Scripture. It's almost as though the events that take place there are too intimate, too precious for human eyes to see.

And yet God has revealed these things for us and given us a record so that at least we can glimpse something that was taking place. Sometimes we have to do that, just to be witnesses. I can remember the first time I went to Auschwitz and I went because I felt I ought to witness it.

Some people have said that that place was hell on earth. Actually it wasn't, there's only ever been one hell on earth. And we're heading towards it now in our story.

Would you like to turn with me to Mark's Gospel? It's Mark chapter 14. We're coming on to the second of the prayers prayed by the Lord Jesus in this period of time that we are calling the hour. And that He said when the Greeks came to Him, the hour has come.

And He said when He prayed to His Father in John chapter 17, Father the hour has come. You'll see how that hour continues if I just read this passage first of all and then come back and pass some comments on it. Verse 26, And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives.

And Jesus said unto them, All of you shall be offended because of me this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee.

And Peter said unto Him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And He spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise. Likewise also said they all.

And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane, that means the place of the olive press. And He said to His disciples, Sit ye here while I shall pray. And He takes with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed and very heavy.

And He said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death. Tarry ye here and watch. And He went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from Him.

Can you see this hour again? 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.

And He cometh and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again He went away and prayed and spoke the same words.

And when He returned He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy. Neither did they know what to answer Him. And He comes the third time and says to them, Sleep on now.

Take your rest. It is enough. The hour has come.

Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. We'll pause there. It is really such an amazing passage of Scripture.

And it's recorded in Matthew's Gospel and in Mark and in Luke. And the reason I've come to Mark's Gospel is because I just wanted to make a connection with what we've got in verse 36. Can you see here? And He said, Abba, Father.

It's only Mark that records that little detail for us. That when the Lord Jesus came to this ultimate place of concentration, of the distilling of all that He had come to do, as He faced it and it comes into clear focus, His instincts still from His heart is, Abba, Father. It speaks of this abiding intimacy, nothing between, no barrier, no cloud, no hesitation, that He must face up to things honestly, realistically.

And we'll see how this comes about now in this particular passage of Scripture. It begins in many ways in verse 27. If you look at verse 27, as they sing their hymn and leave the upper room and make their journey towards the Mount of Olives, Jesus says this to them.

All of you shall be offended this night because of me this night. For it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. Now I'd like you to turn with me back into your Old Testament to

Zechariah chapter 13 because this is a quotation.

And so much of what the Lord Jesus was doing there was stepping into the footprints of prophecy. Things that God had said would be and He is conscious that as He takes each step in the will of God there is a constant fulfilling of the prophecy that God has spoken hundreds of years before in the case of someone like Zechariah. So this is Zechariah chapter 13 and I'm not going to read all of it but I want you to notice how we'll see something that happens that we saw last night.

I was saying last night that Solomon begins to write down or speak out to his secretary the words of the Proverbs and he's composing, writing this hymn to wisdom and suddenly wisdom answers him back and says, I wisdom. Now he is a prophet speaking and just listen for the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy. As I read these words of a man who lived Zechariah, where's that? That's about 400 years before Christ.

Okay, I'm just going to read from don't worry if you don't understand it I just want you to catch, feel catchy enough of the flavour of it. I'll read from verse 4 And it shall come to pass in that day that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision when he is prophesied neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a husbandman for man taught me to keep careful from my youth and one shall say unto him what are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. Can you hear the testimony of Jesus? Which is the spirit of prophecy.

This isn't Zechariah's testimony. This is Zechariah hearing in his spirit the testimony of Jesus which is the spirit of prophecy. What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

We need sometimes to think a little bit about the culture in which Jesus lived. In the East, hospitality is of prime importance. You will know little bits of it from the Scripture if you've thought about it.

Let me give you a really dark illustration. There are a couple of occasions in the Scripture where people act as hosts for visitors way back in the Old Testament. And when a threat comes to the visitor the hosts actually offer their daughters rather than risk the visitors being injured.

Now that is just about as dark an illustration as I can find. But it will give you an idea of how important hospitality is. If you move into someone's house you are their prime responsibility.

You go to the top of their list of duties and responsibilities. This is the pattern of it. It wasn't just that Jesus was wounded by his enemies.

He was wounded in the house of his friends. He came to his own, it says in John chapter 1, but his own received him not. I'm not pointing a finger out to the Jews primarily.

I'm talking about the human race. He came to his own and his own received him not. These wounds that we see in his hands he received in the house of his friends.

That's horror enough. Read on, listen to this. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow says the Lord of hosts.

Now let's listen to who is speaking here. Oops. I've just lost one of the lenses of my glasses.

Okay. That means there will be a tiny screw somewhere. There will be a tiny screw somewhere.

Let's leave it. I can see the fire, it's just I can't see you anymore. It might even be an improvement.

This is, I shall need it to drive home, that's the main thing. This is verse 7. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow says the Lord of hosts. I want you to notice who it is that's speaking.

It is the Lord of hosts. This is one of the titles of God Himself. It is God Supreme.

It's actually the God of battle. The God of all the armours of the Lord. The God of absolute power, dominion and conquest.

And listen to what the Lord of hosts says. He says, Awake, verse 7, Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my companion. Isn't this staggering? Do you remember how a couple of times already we've seen that one of the things that comes out in Jesus' prayer is His consciousness of His closeness to His Father.

Father, I want You to restore to me the glory that I had with You before the world was. I want You to restore to me the glory that I had with You by Your side. And last night we looked at those verses in the book of Proverbs where it speaks of the one who was daily His delight, daily by His side.

These are amazing prophecies. The man who gave these prophecies could have had no false sense of what they were saying. This goes against everything that they'd been taught.

They'd been taught that there's no one by His side, there's no one like Him. He is unique. And yet when this prophetic word comes through they find them saying things that don't quite fit into their theology.

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd and against the man that is my fellow. The reason I wanted to draw your attention to that verse in Mark where it says Abba, Father, is because it speaks of the intimacy of the relationship between the Father and the Son. And now you must understand the horror that is about to dawn in Gethsemane.

For the one who has been His companion from everlasting to everlasting, in whom He had lived in with perfect harmony, concord, sweetness of fellowship, is now going to unsheathe His sword and smite Him. This isn't just a wound that He receives in the house of His friends. This is a wound that He receives from God Himself.

There's another horrifying glimpse in the book of Isaiah. We saw Him smitten of God and afflicted. This is Isaiah trying to struggle with what he sees in his vision.

This servant of God, this One who is daily His delight, this One of whom the Father spoke in His first public gesture. He's baptised in the River Jordan and the Father speaks and says, This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased. And He carried that sense of the Father's favour and approval through every part of His life.

I only, He said at one point in His testimony, I only do those things that please the Father. What a clear conscience. What a sweet relationship.

And now He comes to this bit and as they go out from the place of the Upper Room to the Mount of Olives and the place, the Garden of Gethsemane, the verse that comes to His mind and He quotes it here, going back to Mark 14, verse 27, Jesus saith unto him, All of you shall be offended because of me this night for it is written, I will smite the shepherd. Who is I? Lord, the Lord of hosts, that is it, I. Who is the shepherd? Can you see what a horrendous text this is to begin this journey with? You can see why the mood will change now. This is my Father.

Charles Spurgeon, the great Victorian preacher once said something like this. He said, On the cross it is as though God unsheathed the sword of His righteous anger against all sin and sheathed it once and forever in the body of His Son. Amazing.

At this point, Jesus is thinking about the sword thinking about the hand that must wield it. He knows that this is His Father, Abra. Let's go on a little bit.

Verse 32, They came to a place which was called Gethsemane, the place of the olive press. The place where all the pressure comes on the olive and drives from it its golden life, its juice, its olive oil. There's no accident, it's only part of this.

It's all symbolic. And He takes, He says, Sit here while I shall pray. And He takes with Him Peter and James and John.

And now my old English version says, And began to be sore amazed and very heavy. I was looking at some other some other version this morning. I'd like to read you one or two of them.

There's a version called Young's Literal Translation. He translates it like this. He began to be much amazed and to be deeply troubled.

Let's think a little bit. Being troubled is almost kind of the language sometimes in our fellowships. He's troubled.

The other person is troubled. It's almost as though they're haunted, that there's something that is hanging on, something that they can't shake off. He began to be much amazed and to be deeply troubled.

This is the New King James Version. He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. This is the Rotherham Emphasised Version.

He began to be exceedingly amazed and in deep distress. This is Weymouth. He began to be full of terror and distress.

There's a translation that's almost out of fashion now, but it was a paraphrase done by a man named J.B. Phillips. And this is what he says. He began to be horror stricken and desperately depressed.

Now what's your reaction to that? No, no. Well it just so happens that the words that are used here in the original Greek are used in medical documents of this particular period of time to describe people in the extremities of mental breakdowns and disorders. Our Lord Jesus was perfect man.

And in his perfect manhood he was more sensitive than any of us have ever been. Of all kinds of things that were imperfect, of all kinds of things that touched the hearts and minds of men and women. There's an amazing instance when it talks of when he was at the grave of Lazarus.

In the A.V. it says something like he sighed deeply in his spirit or something like that. It's an amazing word. It's actually a word that's used of a horse snorting in distress.

I don't know whether you've ever, I hope maybe it never happens to you, but if you've ever been in the presence of someone who is absolutely overwhelmed and beside themselves with grief and distress, where they can't think straight, they can't do anything straight, they are absolutely immersed into this thing where every breath is a labour, where their whole body shakes. Do you see what we're getting glimpses of here? It's horrible. And yet the scripture has given us this glimpse.

He came to the place he began to be sore amazed and very heavy. He says to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death. Tower ye here and watch.

And he went forward a little and fell on the ground. Have you noticed that? That's the way it comes through in Matthew too. He prays.

It tells us that when he began to pray he knelt. It's almost as though he knelt at one point and then got up and began to move forward and then overwhelmed, and I'm using that word carefully, I'll come back to it in a minute, overwhelmed by his distress, by this vision of what's going to happen that's coming upon him. Overwhelmed by it, he collapses in a heap, his body wrapped with something that Luke calls an agony of prayer.

He prayed so, says Luke, that his blood that fell from his head was as great gaps of blood, his sweat. This is a human being in such an extremity of passion, of pain, of distress, of fear, of disorder. He is beside himself.

This is the one who was by the Father's side through everlasting ages, who daily delighted in him, and now the fear of all that he must go through comes upon him, and this is how he is. Jesus used different pictures to describe this. We've got a little bit farther here in verse thirty-six.

He calls it a cup. He calls it a cup, and he says, Father, all things are possible unto me. Take away this cup from me.

Can you see the picture? When I read this, I mean I'm not kind of too much into Shakespeare, but I remember this kind of thing from Macbeth that I had to learn. Is this a dagger I see before me, handled towards my hand? And you're supposed to imagine a dagger that's appeared in front of Macbeth, and it's within his reach. He uses the word this, not that, which usually means at a distance, this.

Abba, Father, take away this cup. The Father has presented it to him. It's within his reach now.

Father, take away this cup, if it's possible. Take away this cup. There was a time a little bit later on when he was upon the cross itself, and the people who were mocking him brought this strange accusation against him.

They said, he saves others, he can't save himself. They were right. The two are mutually exclusive.

You can't save others and yourself if you've come to do this job. You either save yourself, and they're lost, or you lose yourself, and they're saved. But the choice is here, right up until the last moment.

The choice is here. The Father offers him the cup. There's another language that Jesus used to describe this moment.

It's strange, unless you've come across it before. It's in Luke's Gospel, when he describes his death like this, and he says, I have a baptism to be baptized with. The ancient Greeks used the word baptism for when they were talking about a ship which had been absolutely deluged and sunk, when it had been overwhelmed by storms, when there was no survival possible, and it was gone, they said it was baptized.

It really just means immersed, but not just dipped, absolutely plunged in and kept under. In fact, let me just lighten it just a little moment for you. There are two Greek words that are very close together.

One is bapto, which means to dip, and the other one is baptizo, which actually means to immerse. And you can see what the difference is, because there's actually a recipe from the kind of first century equivalent of Delia, that tells you what to do with onions. And it tells you that this is what you do with them, that first of all you are to bapto them in boiling water.

That's what you ladies call blanching, isn't it? And then when you dip them, when you bapto them in boiling water, what you do is you baptizo them in vinegar. And that's what they call marinating, isn't it? And what happens in the marinade is that all that it's soaked, that it's immersed into, it remains in there until it's absorbed all the juices, all the flavors. I'm making my mouth water, I like to do this.

All right? Jesus said, I have a baptism to be baptized into. He wasn't just going to be dipped into it. There was something he was going to be marinated in until what he had been baptized into had so soaked into his being that it wasn't possible to separate one from the other.

He said, I have a baptism to be baptized and I am straightened. I'm narrowed, I'm restricted until that. And I've always wondered why the A.V. translators chose this word until that is accomplished.

The reason I don't know why they chose the word is because it's the word finished. The word he spoke on the cross at the end of his Passion. It is finished.

He'd said in Luke, until it is finished. On the cross he said, it is finished. The cross was his baptism.

He was immersed into something and became so completely one with it that it was impossible to say where the one ended and the other began. What was he baptized into? He was baptized into the whole condition of human beings. When he came in incarnation it was the first step of his identification with the human race.

He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was different to you and me in one very special particular thing. He did not have within him the tendency to sin.

He did not have within him the spirit of the rebel which is manifested in our race usually at a time that we call the terrible twos. And you begin to see it when the child understands that he has the power to say no. He has the power to set his will against somebody else.

Now sometimes it can be quite funny that two, but it's not funny as you get older. And all said ultimately is a clash of wills. It's me saying no to God.

But that's what every individual sin is. It comes from a root which the Bible calls sin. You might almost call it sin with a capital S. It's the rebel.

It's the thing that says no to God. It's the thing that ultimately if God forces His way upon me, I will say no whatever it costs. And there was a time in the history of the human race when the only way we could say

no to God was to kill Him and we didn't shrink from it.

We will not have this man to reign over us. And that leaves every human being with only two possible alternatives. Crucify Him or crown Him.

There are no other options. In the final analysis at the bottom line when it comes to the tape there are no other options. You either crucify Him or you crown Him.

And God had restrained this inherent wickedness in the human race. You'd seen it, you'd seen manifestations of it, but you'd never seen it in all its full horror. Until you come to a time when it's amazing because in Luke's Gospel when it tells of Jesus and His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, in John and in the others, you've seen this reference, the hour is coming.

My hour, He called it. In Luke's Gospel when He's arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He says to them, this is your hour and the power of God. That was the human race script of all its culture, of all its politeness, of all its shame.

That was the human race seen for what it was. We will not have this one to reign over us. If we have to crucify Him, we'll crucify Him.

Because we have within us an alien nature, something came into the human race which wasn't originally part of us. And it came from someone that Jesus describes as someone who was a murderer from the beginning. And that spurred His coming to the human race and done something to us.

And Jesus was born without it. That's why He could say I always do those things that please Him. Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.

On the cross He didn't only pay the penalty for our individual sins forensically in a legal sense. He did something much more than that. He was baptized into what the human race had become.

He became the rebel. You get this amazing statement that you get in Paul's letters to the Corinthians when he says He became sin for us. He who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Jesus refers to it in Luke's Gospel and He says, I have a baptism to be baptized with. I want you to turn back with me to Isaiah. I've often said, and I often do say when I'm preaching, that Bible words don't have definitions.

They have histories. What I mean by that is that the way that the Bible uses words means that you really need to continually read the whole Bible. So that you can understand the way in which the Bible uses it.

I'll give you a very simple illustration. The word guilt. You'll often hear people talk about feeling guilty or not wanting other people to feel guilty.

Now the Bible never uses the word guilt as something you feel. Guilt, the Bible uses, is a legal term. In other words, someone is tried and they are found guilty and the law isn't interested one bit in how they feel about it.

It's a legal decision this person is guilty or not guilty as the case may be. And it has nothing at all to do with how a person feels. Now we constantly use the word guilt as though it has something to do with feelings.

And because of that we actually undermine what the Bible is trying to teach us. That He has done something with us so that the guilt is removed. Now you get your feelings into line with the truth.

Never mind trying to grasp the truth from your feelings. I don't tell you just to kind of get it talking properly. Now I've got you praying properly.

Now we can go. No, I'm only kidding, I'm only kidding. Please don't be inhibited by the things I say about you praying.

But we do need to speak carefully when we speak things about God so that we don't dig a trap for ourselves. In other words, I won't go into that. But this word baptism, the word baptism, although you will only find it in your New Testament, in fact it was a word that people knew very well because in the time of Jesus most Jews no longer were familiar with the Hebrew language.

Most Jews from about 700 or about 600 B.C. most Jews have always lived outside Israel or Palestine or the Holy Land whatever you want to call it. From that time this group of people that are known as the Diaspora, that have always been more people outside Israel than were Jews than inside Israel. And many of those lost their use of Hebrew.

But they still wanted to know what God had said. So a translation of the Bible was done, that's usually called a Septuagint, and it's a Greek translation of the Old Hebrew. And that really was the authorised version of the young church.

They didn't use the Hebrew Old Testament mostly, they used the Greek Old Testament. And in that Greek Old Testament the word baptism is there. I said a couple of times I'm not going to go to both of them, but I just want you to turn with me to Isaiah chapter 21 because this word baptism when Jesus uses it it doesn't have a definition but it does have a history.

And I want to show you the Bible history of the word. This is Isaiah chapter 21. This passage of Isaiah is a fairly kind of dismal part.

It's all about judgments which are going to come upon the nations and they're usually introduced by the little phrase that this was the burden that came upon Isaiah. This was the burden. Isaiah, the prophet, sees things that are going to happen to different nations particularly in his own day.

And as that settles upon him there's a weight to it, it's heavy. And he calls it a burden. This is the burden that comes upon him.

And you've got, if you just kind of look back to the last chapters you've got verse 19 you've got a burden of Egypt and there's a lot going on. Woe to this and woe to that. And you've got in chapter 21 and this really is the burden that he has about Babylon.

Now Babylon has Babylon has a special significance as well in the Scripture that I can't kind of go into now otherwise I shall never get back onto the main track. But this is what he says about this vision he has. He's had lots of visions about lots of places but this vision he has about Babylon is more intense than any of the others.

There's something about this vision he has of Babylon which puts it into another league as we've said one or two times in other things. Chapter 21, the burden of the desert of the sea as whirlwinds in the south

pass through so it comes from the desert from a terrible land a grievous vision is declared unto me. These other visions are bad enough I'll tell you but this one there's something about it which in its intensity in its passion, in the effect that it has upon Isaiah while he sees it is more intense than any of the others.

A grievous vision is declared unto me. The treacherous dealer deals treacherously in the spoil of spoilers. Don't worry about understanding too much of the detail, just get the feel of it.

Go up, O Elam, besiege O Midad. All the sign thereof have I made to cease. Therefore are my loins filled with pain.

Pangs have taken hold upon me as the pangs of a woman that travaileth, my old English says. Let's put the more modern word labours into it and we'll come back to that in a moment. Therefore are my loins filled with pain.

Pangs have taken hold upon me as the pangs of a woman that labours. I was bowed down at the hearing of it. I was dismayed at the seeing of it.

Can you see what's happening here to Isaiah? He sees something. He sees as a watchman some judgement that's going to come upon Babylon and even though Babylon is going to become an archenemy of the people of Israel, he is horrified with the judgement that's actually going to come upon Babylon. He's crushed with the burden.

It comes upon him with such an intensity that the only way he can describe it is the most intense thing he's ever seen in his life which is childbirth. I don't want to remind you ladies too much of kind of past times for some of you or frighten any of you who yet have it to come, but as much as anything else, it is a time of acute labour when the whole being is concentrated in one single thing and once it's begun you're committed to see it through to the end. You can't get halfway through and say we'll adopt.

Once this begins, that's it. That's it. Here's Isaiah.

The burden of this comes upon him, the only way he can describe it is with what he has seen probably with his wife when she was born by children. He says here it is, my loins were full of pain. Pains have taken hold upon me as the pains of a woman that travels.

Do you know these pains, these birth pains, when it speaks of the Lord Jesus, when Peter speaks of the Lord Jesus in Acts chapter 2 and he talks about Jesus' death upon the cross and he says this, it wasn't possible for the pains of death to hold him. Do you know he actually uses a word which means the birth pains? It was not possible for the birth pains of his death to hold him. He goes on here, he's describing his reaction to what he's saying.

My heart panted. Now in my authorised version it now says fearfulness affrighted me. Maybe, has anyone got anything different to that to get a slightly different flavour? Halfway through verse 4. My heart panted.

What's the next bit of this you've got? My mind wandered. My mind spinned, my head reeled. It's much more intense than that.

That's it. Horror has appalled me. In fact this is where the Greek Bible uses the word baptism.

It says terror baptised me. That's what it says. In the Old Testament that most of the disciples would have grown up with, that all the early Christians read, they would have read there, terror baptised me.

Terror overwhelmed me. It unmanned me. It crippled me.

It occupied me and consumed me so much in its entirety that I couldn't give my mind to anything else like a mother in travail can't give her mind to anything else. Can't say think of something else. It's a focus.

It's the whole being concentrated on this one thing and it's happening to Isaiah. He's only looking at Babylon and the judgment that will fall upon it and terror overwhelms him. The night of my pleasure he's turned into fear.

You won't understand all this. Just get the feeling of this. Prepare the table.

Watch in the watchtower. Eat, drink. Arise you princes.

Anoint the shield. For thus hath the Lord said to me, Go set a watchman. Let him declare what he sees.

He saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses and a chariot of camels and he hearkened diligently with much heed and he cried, A lion! My Lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the daytime and I am set in my ward whole night. And behold, here comes a chariot of men with a couple of horsemen and he answered me, Babylon is fallen. Is fallen.

If you know the book of the Revelation you'll hear that echo again later on. And all the graven images of her gods he's broken to the ground. Look at this language he uses.

Oh my threshing and the corn of my floor. Do you remember Jesus using this kind of language? Or John rather. John the Baptist.

John spoke about a baptism. Come with me just to, um, do we need to read any more of that? We'll leave that there, having introduced the threshing floor. And if Peter's really mocked, we'll go to Mark's Gospel.

No we won't. We'll go to, um, because it's not in the bit I wanted to turn you to. We'll go to Luke's Gospel.

Chapter 3. We'll go where Di was yesterday, I think. Yes. Alright.

This is, um, this is chapter 3. And I'm going to read from verse 16. John the Baptist speaking. John answered and said unto them all, I indeed baptise you with water.

With one mightier than I comes the lackey to whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire, whose flame is in his hand, and he will thoroughly perch his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner, that the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. He's got that same image of threshing and of burning up of the chaff.

When, my Bible goes on to say this, and many other things in his exhortation preach he to the people. But when Di read that yesterday, Di read, what did you read, Di? With many other exhortations also he preached the gospel to the people. The gospel.

Okay. Let's read verse 16 again. Apparently it's the gospel.

I indeed baptise with water, but one mightier than I comes the lackey to whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Did you know that was the gospel? Or did you think that was some kind of add-on to the gospel later on? Did you think that was some kind of PS to the gospel? You know, you first respond to the gospel and later on you get this.

This is the gospel. This is the gospel. The gospel is He will baptise you in the Holy Spirit in fire.

And it will consume everything that is not of God. And it will make a fresh start where God can be worshipped. Do you remember the story of David's threshing floor? That's what God is going to prepare.

He's going to bring a baptism into the lives of men and women and it will create a new place for an altar where people can serve God in the life of an individual. And that is the gospel. The gospel is not that you can go to heaven if you turn to Jesus.

That's a by-product of it. The gospel is not that you can have your sins forgiven. That's a by-product of it.

This is the gospel. That God can do something in you that will clear the debt absolutely and make it possible for a brand new beginning. That's the gospel.

And usually this will... Let's think again just briefly about Isaiah and his baptism. He sees the shadow of a judgment that is to fall upon Babylon. And although Babylon has no special place in Isaiah's heart, Isaiah is overwhelmed with the horror of what he sees going to happen.

And he uses the word baptism. And our Lord Jesus in the garden sees the shadow of baptism but it's not going to happen to somebody else. It's going to happen to him.

He is going to be baptized. He is going to be overwhelmed. And his reaction to it is what we read in Mark chapter 14 in Gethsemane.

And this isn't coming from an enemy or even in the house of his friends. It's coming from his own father. Let's go back to Mark chapter 14.

Do you remember I mentioned as you're turning back to Mark 14 that Luke uses another word to, instead of going through this little narrative, Luke simply says, he was in an agony. That's the word. Now agony, although we use it a lot in English, it's actually not an English word.

It's a Greek word. And it comes from a Greek verb, agonize. But agonize doesn't just mean primarily to suffer.

It actually means to work very hard at something. For example, when Paul talks about fighting the good fight and when he talks about striving and when he talks about all the energy that someone concentrated into one thing in the way that the gymnasts did it in the Olympics, he uses this word agonize. It's a similar kind of word to the idea that you've got in the woman in Travail.

With everything focused on one thing. I don't know whether I'm not, I don't need to tell you this you'll kind of spot it, I'm not especially athletic. But I do enjoy kind of watching athletes from time to time.

Although sometimes they disturb me. I remember watching Linford Christie winning a race. And he frightened me.

The camera was on him and his eyes are wide open. He isn't even wasting energy blinking. All the energy of this man has gone into his legs.

He's obsessed with one thing. The whole of his being is concentrated, focused on one thing. That's agonizing.

That's the original meaning of the Greek word. Someone concentrating, focusing, striving, everything in one particular place. And Luke says he was in an agony of prayer.

There was such a focus of his being upon this that he must go through. Upon this cup that he must reach out and take. He must receive it now.

I'll read Mark just to remind us again. Verse 32. They came to a place which was called Gethsemane.

And he said to his disciples, Sit here while I shall pray. And he takes with him Peter and James and John and began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy. And he saith to them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death.

Carry ye here and watch. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from him. And he said, Father, all things are possible unto thee.

Take away this cup from me. Nevertheless not what I will but what thou wilt. I'm going to read on a little bit because I want to make this point.

I'll make it like this. And he comes and finds them sleeping and says to Simon Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst thou not watch one hour? Pray ye, watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready but the flesh is weak.

And again he went away and he prayed 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.

And when he returned he found them asleep again for their eyes were heavy neither did they know what to answer him. And he comes a third time and says unto them, sleep on now. I think it's Matthew who tells us that he prayed each time using the same words.

That's why I went back into that little loop. He prays, he comes to this place, he sees the horror of it, he sees the cup extended towards him. He shrinks from it.

He shrinks instinctively from all it means, particularly this that will mean separation from his Abba, Father. But his bottom line is not my will but thy will be done. And he comes to this place and he settles it.

And he goes to his disciples and they're asleep. And he comes back and he faces it again. Three times he faces this thing.

I wonder why three times. Tell you what comes to my mind. Way back in Old Testament times God brought out a people from slavery in the land of Egypt and he brought them to a mountain and he set before them a choice.

He said if you hear my voice and obey my covenant then this is what happens. He spoke to them what they would now kind of call a kind of conditional covenant for people with a kind of a computer background. This is an if then else statement.

If this, then this. And by implication, if not this then something quite different. If you hear my voice and keep my commandment this is what will happen to you.

And God as he began to bring the people of Israel into that unique Sinai covenant relationship with him he begins to say to them, first of all he gives them the broad outlines. If you keep my word, keep my covenant, then this is what will happen. You'll be my people, although all the nations of the earth are mine, you'll be mine in a unique special way.

You'll be a holy nation. You'll be to me a kingdom of priests. Now this was the word that Moses then comes down the mountain and he's actually told initially to give it to the elders.

And he gives it to the elders apparently, but there are some things that are far too important for elders to be left with them. And all the people of Israel unite with one voice and they say all that God has said we will do. So that's the broad principle established.

Yes they do want to be God's people. So now Moses goes back up the mountain, he's the mediator up and down this mountain, he goes back up the mountain to tell God that the people have said yes. Yes in theory, yes according to the broad principles, we do want to be your people, we will keep your word.

So now Moses receives from God the details of the agreement. And if you'll come with me, it's worth doing this, if you'll come with me to Exodus chapter 19 Exodus chapter 19 I'll read from verse um I'll read from verse 3, this is God giving His message to Moses. Exodus 19 verse 3, Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him out of the mountain saying thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel you have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I carried you on eagles wings and brought you to myself.

Now therefore God has brought them to a place, it's actually the first time for several generations that they've been free to make their own choices. He will not force this upon them, He'll offer this to them. For several generations they've been under the cruel will of a king who said do this and they did it and they had no choice in it.

Now He's brought them to a place where for the first time for generations they're genuinely free to make a choice. Now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant then you shall be a special treasure unto me above all people for all the earth is mine and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

And Moses came and he called for the elders of the people and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him and all the people answered together and said all that the Lord has spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people to the Lord. And then God begins to give to Moses the details of this covenant and we'll go to chapter 24 you have to fit those other things in yourself.

And here in verse chapter 24 now you've got this and he said to Moses come up unto the Lord you and Aaron Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord but they shall not come nigh neither shall the people go up with him. And Moses came and told all the people the words of the Lord and all the judgments and all the people answered with one voice and said all the words which the Lord has said we will do.

Have you noticed the pattern here? It's wonderful how God step by step brings these people into an understanding of what he is asking of them so that he doesn't force things on them. God's like that you know. He doesn't come into someone's life as a complete stranger and start ordering them about.

There's a wonderful little cameo in John's gospel. Almost one of the first things we've got recorded that Jesus said. And Jesus was down with John being baptised and seven of John's disciples saw Jesus and they followed him.

And as they followed him Jesus knew they were following and he turned round and he said what are you seeking? And they said where do you dwell? And he said come and see. You know that's really always the first words of the Lord Jesus to a soul. Not a big list of do's and don'ts.

Just come and see. Come and see. Think about me.

Listen to my words. I'm not laying anything on you heavy to begin with. Come and see.

He is wonderful. He has time you know. I sometimes worry I do about some of the ways that we evangelicals get into this concentration on the decision in the moment and decide now and Jesus says come and see.

You come and see. So this is God making sure that they know exactly what it is they're getting into. They said yes to the broad principle.

Now God has given to Moses the details of the arrangement, the covenant and Moses comes down and it says here verse 3, Moses came and told all the people the words of the Lord and all the judgments. So now the whole of Israel know exactly what it is God expects of them. He's repeated to them chapter 20 through to chapter 23.

And then it says this and all the people answered with one voice and said all the words which the Lord has said we will do. Then it says this and Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. I can see a real kind of legal pattern working out here.

This document is now going to be put down into black and white. You know how usually when you enter into a contract there are usually two copies on there. There's the one you get and there's the one the other person gets.

Well this is actually going to be Israel's copy that is their agreement to it. God's going to write his own copy. He's going to write it with his own finger and then do you know this pattern of the story? For the rest of the time then these two copies God's copy and Israel's copy were to be side by side.

God's copy in the ark and Israel's copy by the side. The two together. That's how it was intended to be.

This was the agreement. So what happens here is that Moses now puts it into black and white so that there's going to be no doubt in the future generations well couldn't we arbitrate couldn't we get down to nine or maybe eight or no it's settled. You've signed up to this thing.

Here it is. It's in my handwriting. I'm your representative.

Here it is. Okay. Let's go.

Moses wrote all the words of the Lord and rose up early in the morning and built an altar under the hill and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel and he sent young men of the children of Israel which offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of a portion to the Lord and Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar and he took the book of the

covenant. This is in Moses own handwriting. This is what you see him writing in verse three.

He's written it in verse three now he takes what he's written and he read it in the audience of the people so that not only have they said yes to it, now they know he's actually reading what he's written down so they know he's missed no bits out of it, he's put no bits into it they know now because this is the red document that this is exactly what they agreed to in stage two. How precious God is. And all the people, he did it, read it in the audience of all the people and they said all that the Lord has said will we do and be obedient.

And if you came from an Anglican background you might call that and for the third time I'm asking. It's interesting that the Anglicans have this pattern for weddings when they have to read the banns and they usually do it on successive Sundays and I spent a lot of my younger years in Anglican churches and hearing so-and-so spinster of this parish the banns were now published between her and so-and-so bachelor of the same parish if you have any cause or just impediments while these persons should not be joined in the holy matrimony you do now declare it. The next Sunday you hear them again and then the next Sunday.

So three times I'm asking. The third one actually takes place in the Anglican service which is while the Anglican service is a bit different to everybody else's. Most things that the Anglican do is a bit different to everybody else's.

It comes from having a motto which says as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be. But that's the kind of pattern of the way they do things. So for the third time I'm asking.

Now here this is the third time that the people of Israel have raised their voice with absolute unanimity and say yes to the will of God. And they fail that way. But in the garden we find the one who really is in many ways the true Israel, the true vine.

The one who embraces his Father's will and three times says not my will thy will be done. Like each of an Israel it's almost as though he's going through the same steps consciously. Coming to the same decision three separate times so that there's absolutely no doubt ever that this thing was settled.

He wasn't rushing into this. This wasn't the work of a moment. This wasn't an emotional response.

This is three separate times he comes to this exact same place and he says Father remove the cap from me. Nevertheless not my will but thy will be done. I think you know how this works now.

I'm going to finish shortly. But I'll just remind you of one little event that took place in the garden of Gethsemane. When the temple guard came to arrest Jesus Peter, always the man of action took out his sword and struck at one of them and actually took off the ear of a man named Malchus who was a servant to the high priest.

And it's interesting what Jesus says. He says Peter put off your sword how else will I drink of the cup that my Father has given me to drink? Can you see it settled? It's all done. Now he's embraced it.

He's received it. He's taken it. He has the cup on his hands now symbolically speaking.

It's settled. Even though he knows what the cup contains. And this is another Bible picture.

It contains the dregs of the fury of God's wrath against sin. This is an angry God. That's not a popular thing to say is it in the 20th century.

But the Bible says God is angry with the sinner every day. And God is angry with sin. He is.

And all that had to be visited upon our Lord Jesus upon the cross. He had to embrace it all. He had to take it.

It's all in the cup. And he takes it. And now it's almost as though when Peter tries to defend in Jesus God the cup he won't let anyone take this out of his hands now.

It's settled. He'll drink it. He'll drink it to its last drops.

He'll be baptised into our death. He'll become what we are. All this relationship that he's known with his father, he'll spend it gladly in order to make it possible for you and me to know what he has given it.

It really is amazing. What an astonishing glimpse this is into the heart of God. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son so that those who believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

This is the Father and the Son like Adam, Abraham and Isaac of old. The two of them go together to the place of the sacrifice to accomplish the will of God in perfect harmony. Oh, make me understand it.

Help me to take it in. What it meant to thee, the Holy One, to bear away my sin. Let's pray.

I'm here in the garden. You count the cost. You fudge nothing.

You hide nothing from yourself. You face it in all its terrifying reality. What this next step will cost.

And you go through. Oh, Lord, we thank you for your love. That seems such a feeble thing to say.

We thank you. Thank you for that testimony, Lord, that comes into the hearts of God's people like it did with Paul when he says, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Lord, if you had given the world that would have been something.

A universe, that would have been something. You gave yourself and kept not a drop back but poured it out in your lifeblood. We may hardly dare step into these pages of your book but they're here so that we should at least get a glimpse of what it cost thee, the Holy One to bear away my sin.

Lord, if this is the way you loved and gave your life, how then should we live? What right do we have to our own opinions, their own ambitions, their own goals? Did you not die for us so that those who die would no longer live for themselves but unto him who loved them? Lord, I don't know what to pray. I just ask you, Lord, that you will translate all this into reality in our hearts. Speak your own words.

Show us, Lord, how each one of us should respond even now in our hearts to this. We don't want to give you any more information. We don't want to carry on the preaching by passing on new, fresh ideas in our prayer.

We just simply want to respond to you. Thank you, Lord, for taking the cap. Thank you.

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