

# Gethsemane - li: Blood Drawn, but No Atonement!

by S. Lewis Johnson

---

*The agony of Gethsemane was a divine evaluation of Jesus Christ's suffering, indicating a victory, not a defeat.*

**Duration:** 1:01:55

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:31, Matthew 26:37-42, Mark 14:32-42, Mark 15:34, Romans 3:8-10, Romans 4:9-11

**Topics:** "Gethsemane"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the Gethsemane agony of Jesus Christ. He begins by reading Mark 14:32-42, which describes Jesus' deep sorrow and distress in the garden. The preacher emphasizes that Gethsemane is a foreshadowing of the crucifixion on Calvary. He highlights the contrast between the disciples' confidence in their own strength and Jesus' understanding of human weakness. The sermon concludes with the preacher suggesting several questions for reflection on the significance of Gethsemane for believers today.

---

## Transcript

Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures again. We ask Thy blessing upon us now in this evening hour as we consider the agony of our Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. We pray that Thou wilt direct our thoughts so that we are able to understand what transpired then and also understand its relationship to us in the year in which we live.

We commit the hour to Thee in Jesus' name. Amen. Now tonight I want to begin by reading Mark chapter 14 and verse 32 through verse 42, which is the Mark account of the Gethsemane agony.

Mark chapter 14 verse 32 through verse 42, And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane, and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here while I pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed and to be very depressed. And saith 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. 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 not thou 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 knew they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time and saith unto them, Sleep on now and take your rest. It is enough.

The hour is come. Behold, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hand of sinners. Rise up.

Let us go. Lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand. At the summit of our Lord's life, we commented last time, he saw the cross as the consummation of his ministry.

The form may not have been clear to the human nature of our Lord, but the fact surely was. I think you can trace the evidence that our Lord understood that he would suffer from the time of the temptation on through many of the great events of his life on to Gethsemane and ultimately right to the edge or verge of Calvary. We saw this in the, or we see this in one of the opening incidents of his life when he in Cana of Galilee performed the first of the signs that John records in his Gospel and references made then to the fact that his hour had not yet come.

We see it in the case of the Greeks who came to our Lord and in that very coming to him Jesus Christ recognized that the time of his suffering was indicated because the ministry was now evidently going out beyond the Jewish nation to the Gentiles in the world beyond. Now we also commented upon the fact that in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, they are sufferings that are not only produced by men, but they are produced by God. We see God's action, for example, in the statement in which the Lord Jesus makes, the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? In addition, it is evident that Jesus Christ voluntarily offered himself in his sacrifice.

The suffering also proceeds from the work of Satan, so that the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ are sufferings that proceed from several different sources, from himself, from the Father, from the world, and from Satan. But in a special sense those last few days of his life upon the earth are the Passio Magna, the Great Passion. You remember that he said that he wanted to eat the Passover with his disciples before he should suffer.

Now it is evident that he has been suffering. This is the great hour of suffering, and in Gethsemane we are coming close to the climax of his sufferings. The counsels of eternity now enter into the sensuous living medium of time.

The things that transpired between the principles of the Trinity in eternity past, when they planned all of the events that we find recorded in the Word of God, those great things that they planned are now reaching their consummation. And we are, by the reason of the Scriptures, unable to understand and enter into the experience of the carrying out, the consummation of the counsels of the eternal Trinity before time began. I think we all sense a certain degree of awe in the consideration of Gethsemane.

To fully understand it, of course, is impossible. But the cry of chapter 15 and verse 34, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, throws a bright beam of light upon it. And I do not think that we can possibly understand Gethsemane if we do not recognize that this is the foreshadowing of Calvary or Golgotha.

The connection with the preceding context is obvious, almost ironic. In chapter 14 and verse 31, he spoke the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any way. Likewise also said they all.

The sons, with little s, the sons of God are very confident of their strength. They boast that if the time gets tough, they will never deny Jesus Christ. But thee, Son of God, knows the weakness of human nature.

And when he cries out, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee, take away this cup from me, nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt, we have an insight into what human nature is in itself, dependent and weak. Now last time we put on the board an outline in which I did not have a completed outline, and the first point was the first petition. There are just two points tonight, and so I'm not going to put them on the board.

It's Roman 2, the second petition, verses 37-39. I think I made a mistake last time. I believe I included verse 37 in the preceding point.

It should be 37-39 for the second petition. And then the third petition, Roman 3, verses 40-42. And tonight we're going to spend most of our time on the conclusion, in which I'm going to suggest several questions and try to answer them.

The second petition is given for us in verses 37-39. It would seem that the apostles so close to Jesus Christ, so near to him, would not need support. But they do need support, and when they should have been supporting him, they are nodding in sleep.

And Jesus comes and says, Simon, sleepest thou? Brave Peter, who had promised to die with the Lord Jesus, is not even able to keep his eyes open in the time of trial. He came to the disciples, found them sleeping. He went away.

He went back, having prayed and spoke the same words. And Mark does not tell us that there is any distinction between the second petition and the first petition that Jesus made. The account in Matthew seems to suggest that there is some slight distinction.

But since it's the kind of thing that might take a lengthy explanation, I'm going to pass it by and just let it rest with what Mark says. Essentially, the second petition is the same as the first, and the third is the same as the second. For we read in verse 41, and he cometh the third time, and no evidence is given that any other petition is made than the one described in verse 36, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee.

Take away this cup from me, nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. You might have thought, as you pondered the Gethsemane agony of Jesus Christ in the light of what transpired after it, you might have thought that there was there was some question about whether God the Father even answered the prayers of God the Son. It might have seemed to you, if you analyzed the account of the life of Jesus Christ objectively, that Gethsemane was not a victory at all, but a defeat.

For he agonizes in the garden, writhes upon the ground like a worm, asking God to take away the cup from him, and then in a few short hours he is hanging upon the cross, crucified by Roman and Jewish men. Was it really a victory, or was it a defeat? The world's view, so far as the world is concerned, looking at it objectively from their standpoint, there is every evidence that it would be considered a defeat, because the Roman gibbet is the end of his life. But the answer from the divine standpoint, if you have any question about it at all, is found in the Lucan account of the Gethsemane account.

For there, at the conclusion of our Lord's agony in Gethsemane, we read that an angel came to him, strengthening him. It is evident then that as far as heaven is concerned, what happened in Gethsemane is not a defeat, but a victory. When do you think the angel came and said to Jesus Christ when he strengthened him? Well, the Bible does not tell us, and of course it is the exercise of our imagination to even suggest what may have transpired when the angel came.

He may have whispered the promises that had to do with the messianic regime which would follow in the ears of our Lord. He may have pictured before his mind's eye the glory of his success that should come. He may have reminded him, speaking to his human nature of course, of the promises of resurrection.

He may have sketched for him the scene of the glories that should follow when he should reign in his kingdom. He may even have said to him that the angels would bring the chariots from on high to bear him to his throne ultimately. He might have spoke about the time of the second advent.

There are many things that the angel might have said, might have even spoken of his reign. But at any rate, the angel came, and in strengthening the Lord Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, we have the divine evaluation of the agony that our Lord suffered. It was a victory.

It was not a defeat. And ultimately the resurrection will be the proof of that. Now tonight I want to, that's the conclusion of the exposition of the account itself.

Tonight I want to conclude with several questions and seek to answer them. And the first question is, why the agony? Why the shrinking? I know that these were our Lord's unknown sufferings. In the Greek ritual of the Orthodox Church, the sufferings of the Lord Jesus are spoken of as his unknown sufferings.

I know that these are part of the unknown sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. But why did he who so promised peace to men seem so emotionally disturbed in the agony of Gethsemane? We've been offered a lot of suggestions as to why Jesus Christ writhed on the ground and said, Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but thine be done. And I'm going to suggest a few of them and try to answer them from the standpoint of theology.

Was it first the grief of broken family ties? Was this the thing that was disturbing the Lord Jesus Christ? I think it's fair to say, since our Lord was a perfect man, that no man ever loved his family as Jesus Christ did. That is evident from the fact that he hung upon the cross and in the midst of the agony of Golgotha, he takes time out to make disposition for his mother, Mary, into the hands of his cousin, John. We read in John chapter 19 and verse 25, Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. It seems from this that the Lord Jesus' father, Joseph, was now dead and he, the eldest son, was responsible for the affairs of the family. And in exercising his affairs in a godly way, for in the law of Moses it was specifically stated that one should honor one's father and mother.

Jesus is carrying out, even in his last breaths, perfect obedience to the law of Moses. And so in speaking to his mother, he points her to John the Apostle, his cousin, who stands by and says, Woman, behold thy son. Apparently a committal of Mary to John the Apostle because his own brothers were not yet believers in the law of Jesus.

You know from the teaching of Scripture that the brothers of our Lord were not believers now, but they did become believers. And in fact some of them wrote books in the Bible. But here he commends his mother to John and then to John he says, Behold thy mother.

No one ever loved family as Jesus Christ did. Was he suffering because of the grief of broken family ties? Well, I'm sure that our Lord suffered the human suffering of parting from his loved ones when he died. But that cannot explain the agony of Gethsemane.

Was it the loneliness of fear and misunderstanding? For we must remember that Jesus Christ died without, with most of his friends having fled from the scene of his suffering. Back in Isaiah chapter 63 and verse 3 we read some prophecy of this. I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the peoples there was none with me.

The disciples had been scattered. They had forsaken him and they had fled. Was it the loneliness of fear and misunderstanding that is responsible for the agony of Gethsemane? Again, I'm sure that our Lord, being the perfect man, must have felt the fact that the apostles for the most part had abandoned him and his friends had abandoned him.

But that does not explain the agony of Gethsemane. Was it thirdly the anguish of suspense over God's will? Sometimes it startles Christians I think to realize that Jesus Christ had defined the will of God just as you and I have defined the will of God. It's hard for us to realize that the perfect son of God needed to wait on the will of God just as you and I do.

Was it the anguish of suspense over God's will? Was he wrestling with the fact that he had to be sure that this was the hour in which he should die? Furthermore, that this is the means by which he should die? Was this the thing that was disturbing him? Was he anxious to be sure that he was in the will of God? The decision that our Lord Jesus faced with reference to Gethsemane has often been likened to the decisions that men have faced. Now as you all know I'm a Southerner, and I think that some of the greatest men that America has ever produced have been men from below the Mason-Dixon line. And I think we are very misunderstood by the rest of the United States, and I've had secret wonder in my heart if it would not be better if we still did not have the Confederate States of America as a separate nation.

I'm not at all convinced, I'm not at all convinced that it is better to have fifty-one states or fifty states rather than those southern states that have, that made up the Confederacy. I'm not at all convinced that it is necessarily good for us all to be united in the United States of America. Well you know all of these things that lurk in my heart because I'm that kind of person.

And so it really, it really hurts me a little bit to give you an illustration from the life of Abraham Lincoln, but I'm going to do it nevertheless because there are some Americans that think he was a fair president. It's not often realized that Abraham Lincoln had quite a struggle in his mind and in his heart over the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. It may not be known to you that the night on which Abraham Lincoln signed that proclamation, it was a night of a similar kind of agony for him.

It was the eve of September the 22nd, 1862. You didn't think I even knew the date, I know, but I do. And he sat with that Emancipation Proclamation before him and he wrestled with it and he was troubled about it.

As a matter of fact, he through the whole night was sleepless over the signing of that proclamation. Why? Well every evidence that we can discern from the study of Lincoln's life was this. It was not so much that he was disturbed over whether it was the kind of proclamation that he should sign.

It seems evident that he felt that it was the kind of proclamation that he should sign. But he was disturbed over whether it was the proper time to sign it. And it was not until the early hours of the morning that he finally signed the Emancipation Proclamation, for he was concerned about the time of the signing.

Now it is said by some that the anguish of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane was suspense over God's will. Was this the hour? Well I do believe it was a time of trial for Jesus Christ. I believe it was a time of anguish.

For as I say, he had to enter into the experience of the discovery of the will of God for himself. Now there is a great deal of difference between our Lord's discovery of the will of God for himself and your discovery in mind. Now you see when the Lord Jesus sought to find the will of God, there is nothing wrong in being uncertain about the will of God.

As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus said he was uncertain about the time of the coming. He said the time of the coming? Why, not even the Son of Man knows the time of the coming. Not even the angels.

No man does. Only God. That would be revealed to him as a man.

As the God-man, as the divine person, of course he knows the end from the beginning. But in his human nature he must enter into the experience of the discovery of the will of God. But in his case, as soon as it became evident to him what the will of God was, then there was no question of his perfect obedience.

In our case, when we discover the will of God for ourselves, that's part of our struggle. The next struggle, the next part of that struggle, is the obedience to the will of God that has been made known to us. Now, I'm sure I say that the Lord Jesus suffered suspense, the agony of suspense over God's will.

But with all of this, I do not think it explains the struggle of Gethsemane. Was it the shame of the Roman gibbet? For after all, to die as a man dying upon the cross under Roman judgment was to die as a common criminal. Paul writes of that in Philippians chapter 2 and lays a great deal of stress upon it in that great kenosis passage, the self-emptying of the Lord Jesus.

And you'll remember in the last part of the passage, after he has spoken of the divine glory of the Son of God and how he has made himself of no reputation to come down into our midst as a man, he says in the eighth verse of Philippians 2, in being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even, and I'm going to paraphrase those words as they appear in the Greek text, even such a death as the death of a cross. And so for the Romans, to die as a common criminal upon the cross was to die a death of the greatest shame. Our Lord Jesus in hanging upon that cross is dying the death that criminals died.

And I am sure that that was part of the suffering of the Lord Jesus. But I do not think the shame of the Roman gibbet, as great a shame as it was for him, can explain the sufferings of Gethsemane. It cannot explain that writhing upon the ground, and it cannot explain that petition, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Fifth, was it then the hellish ordeal of demonic opposition? Now we read here that he was sorrowful unto death. We read in Luke chapter 22 and verse 53 that Jesus said about this time, now is your hour and the power of darkness. And it is evident, I think, from the study of Scripture that our Lord was struggling, being tested by Satan during these awful hours.

Clarence Edward McCartney, one of the great preachers of about two generations ago, used to say that when this text says that he was sorrowful even unto death, that we are to understand that as a literal fact. One more pang and his physical frame would have given way. And we know that just after our Lord had spoken to the disciples in the upper room, preparatory to going out to Gethsemane, he had commented in John chapter 14 and verse 30, now the prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in me.

So it is evident that Gethsemane was a struggle in which Satan too played his part. Is it possible that our Lord struggled in Gethsemane because of the hellish ordeal of demonic opposition? I'm sure that that was a great part of our Lord's suffering, but I do not think, I cannot think that that is the real reason why he suffered the agony that is described in our accounts. Was it then sixth, the horror of contact with sin? We read in the 34th verse here that he was exceeding sorrowful.

He was a man who was astonished. He was alarmed. He was taken aback.

Humanity naturally draws back from death's dissolution. No man likes to die. If a man faces death, the first thing that he tends to do is immediately to resist death, to draw back from it.

This is something we know from our birth. No man naturally enters into death. Death is an enemy and we flinch from it.

Even when we are courageous and even when we know we must die and even when we bravely face death, we instinctively turn away from death. Our Lord Jesus was the unfallen man. If anybody ever would naturally turn from death, it was the perfect nature of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm sure, therefore, that when he faced the fact that he was going to have to have some contact with sin, he would naturally turn from it, and it might produce some of the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane. I have a friend who is a man who has done a little bit of studying in the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. And we were discussing this some years ago, and he gave me an illustration which has stuck with me through the years.

He said, you know, Lewis, in the Kasbar in the East, there is a kind of life there that is a kind of life that you do not find but in about three places on the face of this globe. The wickedness in the Kasbar is so great that it's hard for us in the Western world to imagine what it is like. The kinds of diseases, particularly the venereal diseases that people have in places like that, are so powerful that it is difficult for us to live having made contact with them.

He said one thing that the United States Army found during some of our conflicts in world wars was that if some of the men who had grown up on the farms went down into some of the areas in which this disease was rampant, that they were almost immediately stricken down with the disease. Whereas if you looked at the people who grew up in that kind of environment, the little children running around, it seemed as if they were immune to the depths of the disease that they faced. Now, I think if we transfer that to the spiritual realm and realize that with you and with me, we have spent our whole life in sin.

We have spent our life in an environment that is full of sin. We do not know anything but a sinful environment. But then when you remember that Jesus Christ came down into our midst as the sinless Son of God, then I think you can understand what it must have been to him in some measure.

Not completely, no one could understand that, but in some measure for a pure being to enter into the kind of existence that you and I have, that in itself was humiliation and suffering. And so it may well be that a great deal of the agony of Gethsemane is the horror of contact with human sin, for it is soon to be his experience. For the Bible says, he was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

Now, I think we can add all of these six things together and we can pile them all up and we can say, well, this explains part of the agony of Gethsemane. But to me, it does not really explain what happened in Gethsemane. I think this seventh suggestion must be included if we are to understand why our Lord Jesus agonized as he did.

It was the agony of the anticipation of the divine execution of wrath upon sin because of the broken law of God. Now in verse 33, where we read in Mark 14, that he was very heavy or very depressed, as this new Scofield edition translates that word. In that we have a clue.

Remember last time I pointed out to you that that word translated very depressed in verse 33, or very heavy, is a word that in the Greek comes from another word. It's *ademas* and it comes from *apademas*, which means away from home. In other words, the sense, the feeling of separation from the Father has now begun to come into the life and experience of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that which we find here in the Gethsemane account reaches its climax when Jesus Christ will cry out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And so that little sense of being away from home, that little sense of separation which our Lord begins to feel in Gethsemane, is of the essence with what he will eventually feel in the greatest measure when he cries out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Now when he cries out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He is talking about the experience of the judgment of God being executed upon him for the broken law of God. And so it seems to me that what we have in Gethsemane is the agony of the anticipation of the experience of Golgotha. Now whatever we may say about Karl Barth, and we could say a great deal about his theology, it is true to say about him that he was given some very interesting insights into the truths of the word of God.

I am not a Barthian in my theology. I think that Professor Barth did not understand the doctrines of inspiration. I think there are many other doctrines that he did not properly understand, although he is probably regarded by theologians as the greatest theologian of the twentieth century.

But there is one remark that he made with reference to Gethsemane that I think is right on the point. He said in the explanation of Gethsemane that there the bill, like the account, the bill was being presented. It was as if the Father were intimating to our Lord in the agony, in the experience of Gethsemane, resulting in the agony, that it is just a few hours now before he must pay the accounts for sinners.

And so the bill is being presented, and our Lord is sensing some of the anticipation of the divine execution of wrath upon sin because of the broken law. Now then, one of the things that we have been trying to do in our series of studies is to treat the doctrine of the atonement as we have been going along. And so every now and then I've stopped and have tried to give you something of the teaching of the Word of God on the theology of the atonement.

And we remember just a few weeks ago discussed Abelard and the moral influence theory of the atonement. That is, that the sufferings of Jesus Christ are not designed in themselves to be a satisfaction for sin. It is not God executing judgment upon Jesus Christ because our Lord stands as a substitute for sinners and bears the judgment for those sinners.

But rather, Abelard and others who have a similar kind of theory of moral influence, Abelard taught that Jesus Christ by his death and in his death sought to give us an example of the love of God and by that example to provoke in us a response of love toward God. In other words, the idea of satisfaction of the divine justice and holiness is missing. And what we have is a kind of exhibition of the love of God designed to win us by the evidence of the love of Jesus Christ to win us to God.

The essential thing that is missing is the satisfaction of the divine justice. And so Jesus Christ comes through as dying to give us an example of how we ought to live, provoking us to love and love for God in response to what he did. Now I think if we will think for just a moment about the Gethsemane account, we will see how inadequate that is to explain the atonement of Jesus Christ.

Let's just suppose, for example, that Jesus Christ is our example and that he is supposed in his life and in his ministry to be the kind of example for us by which we ought to live and we do not need any satisfaction for our sins. Well now, let's just ask the question, should men die like Jesus Christ does? If he is the example, should we not die like him? Well now I submit to you that Jesus Christ is not a good example of death. He is not a good example of the experience of death.

I would submit to you that if we were looking at this as an example of a way to die, Stephen provides us with a great deal, a good deal better example than Jesus Christ. He died courageously. He died saying, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge and our Lord Jesus in the agony of Gethsemane is writhing upon the ground saying, take away this cup from me if it be possible, O my Father.

Our Lord is not an example of how a man should die. It is evident that the exemplary theory of the atonement and theories such as the Abelardian do not explain the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. When I was in Edinburgh this past fall, I was amazed to discover on the faculty of the university's theology school at New College that there is today a remarkable resurgence of a theory of the atonement that was popular in Scotland in the nineteenth century.

It was a theory that was produced or advertised most widely by J. McLeod Campbell, who wrote a remarkable book. And of course in the writing of the remarkable book, the heresy of the book, I do think it is heresy, the heresy of the book gained a remarkable hearing because it was written so well and so beautifully. It often seems to me that Satan's servants have gifts of language and eloquence by which they are able to expound with a great deal of appeal their erroneous theories.

And I would like to suggest to you that when you are listening to men who are preaching the Word of God, that you should be careful to make a distinction between the eloquence with which they speak and the truth that they are uttering. Because in the final analysis it is the truth that they are uttering that is the important thing. And it's a sign of immaturity to be carried away with the way that they express their truth.

McLeod Campbell, in a beautiful way, expressed the view that Jesus Christ was a substitute. He was a sacrifice. He came to offer a vicarious sacrifice.

But He did not die and satisfy divine judgment. But He offered to God a perfect repentance for sin. And in offering to God a perfect repentance for sin as a substitute.

He as our substitute accomplished atonement for us. Now is that biblical teaching? Now it is true, of course, that Jesus died as a substitute. So it is evident that if we explain our Lord's death as a substitutionary sacrifice, we've not said enough about the atonement of Jesus Christ.

It's possible to say that He died as a substitutionary sacrifice and be erroneous in our biblical doctrine. Though He did die as a substitute. The question is, in what way was He a substitute? Was He a substitute in that He offered a perfect repentance to God for us? Or was He a substitute in the sense that He bore the judgment of God, in penal judgment at that, for our sin? That's the question.

That's the issue. And again, I think it is evident from the Gethsemane account that Jesus Christ, and you can trace all of the activities of our Lord through the New Testament, and you will find that He never, it is never stated that He offered for us a perfect repentance for sin. That is never stated.

He never says, for example, O my Father, I have sinned, and I speak for the people of God. O my iniquities are heavy upon me. The psalmists in the Old Testament speak that way, but Jesus Christ never speaks that way.

Have you ever noticed that? He never confesses His sin. He never confesses the sins of others for them. He never makes any perfect repentance for sin.

And the atonement does not consist in the perfect repentance for sin. The only way in which we can explain what happened in Gethsemane is to say that there He bore the execution of, that there He anticipated the divine execution of God's wrath upon sin because of our guilt due to broken law. O death and the curse were in our cup.

O Christ was full for thee. We sing in the Lord's Supper meetings, and that is biblical. Now then, having attempted to answer the question then, why the agony? It was because He anticipated what would happen at Calvary.

I want to suggest a riddle for you that has to do with Gethsemane. And there is a text in the Bible that I want you to think about in the light of the book, in the light of the experience of Gethsemane, and it is in the little book of 1 John. 1 John 4 verse 18.

I feel bad about suggesting this to you because it might upset you a little bit. But you see, we must learn to face all of the questions that arise out of the Word of God. I don't like to offer questions to people to disturb them if I don't have the answer, and I'm sure there are many questions for which I don't have the answer.

So don't worry, I'm going to try to give you an answer to this one. But first I want you to consider the question. In 1 John 4 verse 18 it says, There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment or punishment.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear. Now the riddle of Gethsemane, it seems to me, is mirrored in that statement in 1 John 4 verse 18. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment.

Why then the horror of Gethsemane? If perfect love casts out fear, then why did not the perfect love of Jesus Christ cast out fear? Why did not our Lord Jesus fear in the garden of Gethsemane? Why is it that he prays with strong crying and tears, the epistle of the Hebrews says, in the light of these texts? Why the horror? Well as no other who came to the Father, it could be said of Jesus Christ, God thrusts him away. It could never be said of you and me, that God thrusts us away when we come to the Father. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, He will not leave thee nor forsake thee.

But what does the Bible say concerning Jesus Christ? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? All the smoke of the altar of the soul of Jesus Christ, instead of flowing upward so that God smells a sweet smell of the sufferings of Christ, all of the savor of the suffering of the Lord Jesus, when he hung upon Calvary, the smoke does not go to heaven as a sweet savor to God, but it seems to go down to the ground, for there he stands as accursed. All of those animals that Israel brought to the altar and which were slain by the side of the altar, and when they were burned, the smoke of the sweet savor of the sacrifice went up to God, and the Old Testament says, He smelled a sweet savor of the sacrifice. He was pleased with what was happening there, because it represented the faith of those who brought the offerings.

But in Jesus Christ's case, there was no such sweet savor on the part of God, for he must turn himself away from the Son. So he finds the door to his father's house closed to him. The only person who ever knocked on the door of the throne of heaven and heard the voice, Go away, because Jesus Christ at Calvary is the Son who is the lost Son.

The judge has barred him access into the presence of God. Oh, the terrible hour of Golgotha. Therefore, the casting out of fear cannot take place in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the one exception. Perfect love casts out fear, and when there is love, there is no fear. But in our Lord's case, because he must die as the substitute for sinners, he must experience the closed door of heaven itself.

Amazing fact. Amazing. And of course, it all goes back to his relationship to us.

The cup of passion must be drunk because of the law of mediatorship. There is love in God, my dear friends, but there is also justice in God. And this is the thing that we in the twentieth century need to remember.

God is love, but God is also holy, and his justice must be completely satisfied, else there is no law in this universe at all. Now, my last question. What is the application of the Gethsemane account? I'm going to suggest some things rather rapidly.

First, the first thing that comes out of the Gethsemane account is the perfection of the great high priest. For the sufferings of Gethsemane are designed to perfect our Lord Jesus as our great high priest. We read in Hebrews chapter 5, verses 7 through 10, who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, he's speaking about the Gethsemane experience, and was heard in that he feared.

Now, of course, in Gethsemane he was heard in that he feared, because he feared by saying, nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered, and having been made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto

all them that obey him. And so here in Gethsemane then, the Lord Jesus reaches his perfection as a great high priest, passing through all the experiences that is required of humanity in order to reach maturity.

The sufferings touch his human nature, and so in his human nature he must experience all of God's sufferings. Christ himself, of course, was not inconstant in the sense of less faithful, was nonetheless as bearer of natural creaturely human life subject to the natural law of undulation, capable of learning, susceptible of accretion in his temporal human existence. That's what the Bible says, means when it says he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.

The Bible does not say he learned to obey, but he learned obedience in that he experienced obedience. He had to grow in the experience of that obedience, and it was part of his preparation as great high priest. So his fidelity which was always constant is something that must be tested at every point of his life.

And finally, on Calvary, when the final test is passed, our Lord becomes, as a result of the resurrection that follows, the great high priest after the order of Melchizedek. And so the sufferings of the Gethsemane agony let us know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the great high priest that we have in heaven at the right hand of the throne of God is a high priest who perfectly meets all of the qualifications of God. You know I've always thought that one of the most wonderful texts in Hebrews is the text in this fifth chapter in which we read in the fourth verse, and no man taketh this honor of being high priest unto himself, but he that is called of God as was Aaron.

Now you'll notice that in that text it says that to serve as a high priest is an honor. And when you think about this from the divine standpoint what that means is that God considers it an honor to be our high priest. That Jesus Christ considers it an honor to be the high priest of Louis Johnson.

Now what an amazing thing that is. I wouldn't think that would be any honor at all. But our Lord considers it an honor to serve as our high priest.

And by virtue of the agony of Gethsemane he demonstrates his perfect qualifications for priesthood. Second, by the way, as you probably can tell I have to read a lot of literature that is unscriptural. And I must confess I am amazed at the lengths to which unbelief will go in its interpretations of the Word of God.

Some of the men are eminent examples of men so full of their own minds that they see little in the Gospels except that which they bring to the Gospels. And therefore they not only miss what's there but talk about a great deal that is not there. Some great Bible teacher has spoken of many of the critics as being men who have learned how to spell but who have not learned how to read.

For they are so interested in the little details that they've missed the whole meaning of the text of Scripture. Or as one has put it, a man who believes that the life of Christ is in the letters of the dictionary and that it's merely a matter of putting them properly together to produce the force which has created Christianity. Fortunately the texts of the Word of God are eminently plain and clear when we come to them with an open mind and under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Now another thing. It's evident that in Gethsemane we have a beautiful illustration of the power of prayer. Do you remember when our Lord began to suffer the agony of Gethsemane? And finally when the agony became most intense and he began to sweat as it were great drops of blood upon the ground? Just think, if you had been in Gethsemane and had come over to the place where Jesus Christ had been and looked at the ground, there you would have seen the evidence of the blood that came out of his pores because of

the agony which he was experiencing.

And when that transpired, do you remember what the next verse of soul of Scripture says? And he prayed the more earnestly. And if you ever wanted a lesson in the power of prayer it is the Gethsemane account. There is the sorrow unto death, there is the horror, there is the oppressive sense of sinking, there is the oppressive sense of separation from God, there is the bloody sweat and tears, there is the more earnest prayer from the perplexity and yet he was heard by virtue of that little clause that he added, nevertheless not my will but thine be done.

Some men have a great deal of difficulty in understanding how Jesus Christ can pray, oh my Father take this cup away from me, if it be possible. They point out of course that he did say, nevertheless not my will but thine be done. And I am so glad that he did say that, for had he not said that I must confess as I said last week that my faith should wobble and stagger like a drunken man if we did not have that clause.

But we do have that clause as an evidence of the perfection of the humanity of the Lord Jesus. And in it we have the picture of the efficacy and power of prayer, he was heard. Third, we have in this of course a pattern for victory, therefore nevertheless not what I will.

Every prayer that you and I ever uttered, utter, should be accompanied by nevertheless not what I will but what thou dost will. In this great struggle between shuddering human nature and the indomitable will of the perfect divine person, the Lord Jesus, finally indomitable will conquers in the struggle between the human nature and the divine personality. Now we must learn to pray not some of the prayer that Jesus Christ prayed but all of the prayer that he prayed.

And I don't know of anything that should be a greater comfort to a Christian who faces trials than this. Many Christians lives, in fact you could write their biography in the words of Scripture, being in an agony. There are some Christians who must face that kind of life.

Amy Carmichael was almost, I think, a person like that. You could write her life story, being in an agony. And many of you know what it is to be in an agony.

And if you don't, the chances are that you soon or ultimately will. And the lesson that Gethsemane speaks to us is that the way to triumph in the midst of agony is to pray all that Jesus Christ prayed and to rest your case in the hands of God. And one final thing.

Really it's the greatest thing, I guess, for us. But in this great event of Gethsemane, we see the passion that Jesus Christ had for our souls. In Gethsemane our Lord, in effect, says, I am willing to die for sinners.

On Calvary he will say, it is finished, but they are of a peace. He prayed, oh my God, if it be possible. But my Christian friends, it was not possible.

And so he must suffer, and he does. And that is the measure of the passion of the soul of Jesus Christ for you and for me. That is, if you think of yourself as a sinner, for he died for sinners.

One of the great Scottish preachers was William Clough. I like to read William Clough's books. I must confess, I think he was a follower of McLeod Campbell.

But he was a great preacher, and he has a great deal of truth in his writings. In one of his books he tells of an incident that happened in his ministerial life in Scotland. He went up into the Highlands, and he spent

the night with a retired naval officer who was active in one of the churches that he was going to preach in.

When the time came after supper to have a brief time of devotion, the naval officer turned to Mr. Clough and he said, Mr. Clough, I'm not used to uttering prayers in public. I would appreciate it if you would read the prayer book, and that you would offer the prayer if you don't mind. He handed him a prayer book from the Church of England.

And Mr. Clough, as he opened up the book and looked at the prayers that he was expected to read, he said he noticed that throughout, page after page, at the end of the prayer, in the name of Christ or through Christ, this man, evidently a godly man, at least by reputation and by confession, had rubbed through, had written, had just drawn two lines through, for Christ's sake, for Christ's sake, all through the prayer book. And when Mr. Clough looked at it, it was evident to the officer that he recognized that Mr. Clough was disturbed, and so he explained. He said, well I know you see that, but I want to explain to you the reason I have done that is because I don't think that God requires anything from Jesus Christ in order to forgive our sins.

I think that all we have to do is just to come to him and confess our sin, and he just forgives us. And that's all there is to it. There is no need for Jesus Christ.

Mr. Clough said he offered the prayer, and that began to talk with the man later on. Didn't say anything at that time about the theology of the matter, but later on he said the conversation became good. And by that he meant they began to speak about the divine things.

And Clough said he began to talk about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and he began to talk about the beauty of divine law, and how divine law, if it is bypassed, is no law at all. And if laws, judgments, and sanctions are not executed, there is no such thing as law. And finally he came around to the sufferings of Christ, and he pointed out that the reason that Jesus Christ died is that he was offering a satisfaction for sinners in order to establish the law of God in righteousness and holiness.

And it is on the basis of the fact that Jesus Christ established the law of God as unbending law, inflexible justice, that we can have a righteous salvation. And he said the naval officer remembered some sins that he had committed in his youth. He told him afterwards.

And he said I realized that there was no way that those sins could be forgiven without satisfaction. And finally he spoke to Mr. Clough and he said, your gospel is a better gospel than mine. And Mr. Clough said, let's have a word of prayer.

And he said he prayed, and when he finished he said, we thank thee, O God, that for Christ's sake our sins are forgiven. Well, that, of course, is the gospel, that Christ did suffer under the judgment of God, bore our judgment, and for Christ's sake sinners are forgiven. I cannot understand the woe which thou wert pleased to bear.

O dying Lamb, I only know that all my hope is there. That's something of what Gethsemane means to me. It is the anticipation of that great event.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, we are grateful to thee for the scriptures, for the greatness of the sufferings of Christ. And O Lord, as we have prayed so often, may they grip our hearts and stir us to devotion to thee, for Christ's sake.

Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/27/SID27691.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/s-lewis-johnson/gethsemane-ii-blood-drawn-but-no-atonement/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**