

## EXPOSITION

## I. THE ARRIVAL IN THE GARDEN – V.39

**Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.**

- They leave the upper room after the last supper and move to the **Mount of Olives**, to a place called Gethsemane. This was a garden or small field with olive trees and would have contained a press to crush the olives to remove the oil. Going to this place was Jesus "custom", something He had done frequently. This probably means that since being in Jerusalem, after He had preached and taught at the temple, each evening He used this as a prayer retreat with His disciples. It is also possible that they would spend the night there during this season in which Jerusalem was overflowing with people
- Judas knew of this place (Jn18:2), and rightly anticipates that this is where Jesus will be when he brings the multitude of men to arrest Him. One of the advantages of being arrested there was that it was away from the people. This plan is orchestrated by Jesus, showing His willingness to be betrayed and willingly giving Himself.

## II. THE COMMAND TO PRAY – v.40

**When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."**

- What is at the heart of Jesus' interaction at this time with His disciples is the command "pray." They are coming to a time of great temptation. Their world is going to rock, and there is but one way they will be prepared, and that is to pray.
- The primary reason for their need to pray is that they would not enter into temptation. This was one of the things that Jesus taught them to pray in the "Lord's Prayer." They need God's help and wisdom and strength in the face of temptation. If they pray, God will give help. If not, then they are in danger of entering into temptation leading inevitably into sin.
- Application: When we are under the stresses of life and business, we so often leave off prayer. We make excuses, get caught up with other things, and fail to call upon God as we should. That is the very time we need to be praying, as we are very vulnerable.

## III. JESUS' PRAYER – vv.41-42

- Jesus not only instructs them to do so, but does so Himself. Jesus led by example. In this most intense time, He went to the throne of His father, with humility and submission, to express His desires.

## A. His Placement – 41a

**And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw**

- When compared to Matthew and Mark, Luke presents a "compressed" narrative. One thing that is presented differently (though not a contradiction) Jesus leaves 8 of the disciples further off (a stone's throw), and takes Peter, James and John closer to be with Him during His prayer time.

## B. His Posture – 41b

**and He knelt down and prayed**

- This is a posture of humility and submission. Eventually He falls on His face (Mt26:39).

## C. His Request – v.42

**saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."**

- This passage is a marvelous preservation of the prayer of our Lord as He enters into the most excruciating time of His existence. He has come under great distress, and things will get worse. He knows that His Father has ordained this for Him from the foundation of the world. This is something that for thousands of years has been anticipated, and especially since the dawning of His consciousness as a young man. Now, "the cup is before Him."
- The cup represents what someone serves you. It was a symbol of what you receive from someone as they choose what to give. In biblical times, your cup running over meant that what you had been given was abundant. In Ps16:5 the Psalmist describes God as his portion and his cup, meaning that God was his own God.
- But cup was also used in a negative sense. There could be a cup given which was bad, and in this symbol one was to drink it down, though it was bitter. God uses this analogy in Ps75:7-8 (read). The picture is of God's wrath given to someone, and their forcibly being made to drink it down to the bottom. It is a cup of judgment (Ps11:6 Is51:17). It is this kind of cup that Jesus refers to. A cup of wrath that He is taking to accomplish what is needed for salvation.
- Jesus asks plainly that if it is within the will of His Father, that this cup might be taken away from Him. This may seem like an odd request, seeing that Jesus has been anticipating this event and teaching His disciples about it very firmly. He has said again and again that this is God's will. What then is going on?

- Something that might help us to understand His request is that He isn't merely looking forward to the cross. He isn't anticipating the physical agony and requesting that God would keep Him from it. What we can't miss is that He has already entered into an excruciating experience. Jesus is, at this time, already increasing agony and His prayer was intensifying. The agony that He is feeling is so intense that it has physical effects. The term used in v.44 either refers to sweat falling so profusely that it was like blood or that the intensity of the stress was causing a condition called hematidrosis. Either way, the mental angst He was feeling was having severe physical consequences.
- It is during this time in the Garden that Mt26:37 tells us that He began to be sorrowful (Gk. lupeo = passive, distressed, pained) and deeply distressed (Gk. adomoneo = troubled to the point of anguish)." John uses the word (Gk. petaraktai = disturbed, terrified, frightened). Jesus says about Himself in Mk14:34 that He was (Gk. perilupos = enclosed by sorrow) even to the point of death. What He was experiencing was literally killing Him. Remember, this is before any physical harm has been inflicted by men.
- Another thing that is different here is that in the other Gospels is that we are told that Jesus leaves and returns to His disciples several times. Luke only indicates one season of prayer, while the others indicate three with Jesus returning to urge His disciples to watch and prayer. It is sufficient, for Luke's purpose, to only indicate one. But what this indicates is that there were three intensifying seasons of prayer.
- So intense was this inward pain that Heb5:7 describes this event as Jesus offering "up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears." What was taking place was not a quiet and calm expression of His desire, but deep, earnest and agonizing cries.
- So returning to the question, "How could Jesus ask if it was God's will that this cup could be removed when He knew it couldn't?" Another question that is often asked is whether we see a contradiction between Christ's will and the Father's will? Some will go so far as to use this text to try to disprove that Jesus is God.
- To understand the answers, let's remember the analogy. Jesus has begun to drink the bitter cup of God's wrath, There is terror, agony, and anguish in His soul. How does He respond? Not as a stoic (early philosophy that said people should be free from passions and treat everything with passivity). He doesn't grit His teeth and passively accept that this is just the way it is. In His human weakness (not sin), He cries out with agony "if it is possible, this is so horrible, it is so bitter, please Father take it away." If He had sufficiently drank enough to satisfy God's wrath, then let the cup be removed. His human nature wished the agony to cease. We don't have a Savior that floated "above" the anguish, but was being swallowed up.
- That leads us directly to the second question, is there a contradiction between Jesus' will and the Father? Is He saying "I have one will, but you have another?" To answer this, consider that when He says "nevertheless, not my will by yours be done" He is expressing that there is something of His will which is higher than His will for the removal of the cup. When He says "Your will be done", we see that He wills for God to continue what is most glorifying to Him.
- Illustration: We should understand that we have the same kind of complexity to our will. If one of our children was diagnosed with cancer, and we pursued radical radiation or some other treatment to seek to save their life, would the pain and suffering that they received be something we inflict willingly? Yes, and no. A similar thing is taking place here.
- I believe it is accurate that even in the Father this mixture was taking place. As He was pouring out His wrath upon His Son He was doing so according to His will to save a people from eternal death and redeem them to Himself. At the same time He was taking no joy and delight in it as a kind of sadist, taking joy in inflicting suffering. This is what He says about His afflicting Israel with grief in Lam3:32-33, that He does not afflict willingly.
- The bottom line of all this is the unimaginable horror and anguish that Jesus was suffering at this point, before the scourging and crucifixion, there is a cry of submission in the midst of the pain of His soul.

#### IV. THE STRENGTHENING OF JESUS – VV.43-44

***Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.***

***And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.***

- These verses are questioned due to their missing in some of the early manuscripts. They have very early witnesses, and the question is whether Luke originally wrote them. There are at least two possibilities:
  - (1.) Someone might take them out due to it making Him "too human"
  - (2.) They were added by early oral or written tradition as an added commentary to Jesus' agony.
- I believe there is sufficient evidence to indicate that they were original (even if not, the truths spoken there are spoken elsewhere).
- Regardless, what is found here reflects something we know for sure. Jesus, at another critical time, was supported and ministered to by angels Mt4:11. It is not hard to accept that, during this other key time of temptation they would have been helping Jesus and strengthening Him.

- We should notice that this is the Father's answer. The cup would not be removed, but He would be strengthened to finish drinking it. It is said that in Jesus' human nature that if His Father had not sent an angel to strengthen Him, this agony would have killed Him. This was also an encouragement that His Father had not completely abandoned Him.
- There was more going on in Jesus suffering than what happens in the beatings and on the cross. This seems to imply that had not angels (or God Himself) upheld His human nature, this alone would have killed Him.
- Application: It is in this way that we too should pray. It is very appropriate to pray for the removal of some trial, whatever it may be. We are not to be stoics. Things really hurt, and pain can be very deep. We are allowed to cry out to the Lord for relief and help. But in doing so we say, nevertheless, Your will be done.

#### V. THE REBUKE OF THE DISCIPLES – vv.45-46

***When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, "Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation."***

- This is the last "cycle" of Jesus prayer (from other Gospels). God has given Him the answer. He will continue, and He will endure. Now He returns to His disciples, and turns His attention to their care. Even in the midst of consuming suffering, He is concerned for their welfare and calls them again to rise from their sleep and pray so that they would not enter into temptation.
- Application: We too need this exhortation, particularly in those morning hours before we face the temptations of our day. Let us shake of sleep and weariness, and rise and pray lest we enter into temptation without the help of God.

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#### APPLICATION

- For the Christian, we should look and see the cost of our sin. This is what our sin deserves. Jesus is suffering Hellish wrath, and even He recoiled and writhed under its relentless sorrow. This should move us to thankfulness, worship, and adoration of the One who would so willingly take it for us.
- For the unbeliever, this is what your sin deserves, and what you will receive eternally if you do not receive forgiveness with Christ. Do you have hope that you can bear what caused such anguish in the Son of God? Do you hope to endure eternally in this state, to suffer everlasting misery that is displayed in the Lord Jesus. I urge you to look to Him, to hope in Him, to trust in Him.